Module 6

TALKS

Use the talents you possess, for the woods would be a very silent place if no birds sang except the best.

Henry Van Dyke

Module 6

TALKS

What is it?

Personal verbal interaction with park audiences.

Why do we do it?

To increase appreciation and enjoyment of park resources.

How do we do it?

Through formal and informal discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Talk is the most basic element of personal services interpretation. Through the power of speech and the nonverbal adjuncts associated with our delivery, we attempt to "light the spark" of curiosity and wonder. In the previous modules, we discussed in general terms the whats, whys, and hows of personal interpretation. In the next five modules we will address the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for presenting talks, walks, campfires, children's, and roving programs. Before we embark onto new territory, following the principles of good interpretation, we will recap a little of what we have already learned.

Interpretation is an artful form of communication that stresses ideas and relationships, not simply isolated facts and figures. This is most frequently done through the use of hands-on illustrative media, first-hand experiences, and/or the use of physical objects. Good interpretation communicates the science of the natural and cultural world to an audience in a manner that is provocative and interesting while leaving them wanting to discover more. It facilitates connections between the meanings inherent in the resource and the interests of the audience.

Interpretation is not the same as teaching. The people who attend interpretive programs are there because they want to be there (non-captive audience). There are no externally motivating factors keeping an audience from leaving. Because of this, one of the most important things to remember is the "priceless ingredient" Tilden talked about—love. Love will allow you to be enthusiastic, knowledgeable and engaging, and to communicate effectively with your audience. We have seen that to effectively communicate, you must establish all the elements embraced in RAPPORT. With this in mind, we will now focus on the most fundamental tool of the interpreter—the talk.

6.1 TYPES OF TALKS

Talks can be either formal, focused, site-specific presentations or informal, spontaneous dialogues. Whether formal or informal, your talk should help visitors move from satisfying their basic needs to fulfilling their growth needs, the ultimate being self-actualization (see *Module 3—Communication*). There are many types of talks, conducted in diverse venues and presented to many different types of audiences. We describe some of them here.

FORMAL

A formal talk consists of a structured presentation to an audience where the interpreter has developed a program with a prepared theme, introduction, body, and conclusion. There are many venues for formal talks. Here are a few.

Walk/hike/tour

We inclusively call walks, hikes, and tours **walks.** Taking your talk "on the trail" provides the opportunity to involve the audience directly with the resource being interpreted. The interpreter guides the audience through a series of thematically planned and well-researched stops. Walks are covered in detail in *Module 7—Walks.*

Site

The purpose of the site talk is to interpret what has happened, is happening, or might happen at a specific location. The site talk may include a demonstration, results of research, or it may feature a specific location focusing on natural and/or cultural topics.

Campfire

A campfire talk, steeped in tradition, is a multisensory and participatory opportunity to interpret park resources to a diverse audience. Campfire talks may use audiovisual equipment, guest speakers, demonstrations, storytelling, and a host of other imaginative and creative media in an evening of fun, education, and interpretation. *Module 8—Campfire* details the techniques and skills of the campfire talk.

Children

Talks to children, while encompassing all the RAPPORT elements, are designed and delivered to an audience that has specific needs, developmental phases, and desires. A children's talk should not be a "watered down" version of an already existing program, but a talk developed especially for children. Children's interpretation is covered in detail in *Module 9—Kids*

Classroom

The classroom provides a venue for integrating our park messages with academic content standards. Ranging from elementary to college classes, classroom talks provide an opportunity to present park themes, discuss pre/post park visits, and encourage park advocacy.

Speaking Engagement

Speaking engagements in the community afford excellent opportunities to connect with constituents who may not routinely visit parks or attend our formal programs. These outreach experiences provide opportunities to present park topics and issues, develop support for park programs, and extend an invitation to the community to visit their park and recreation areas.

SPONTANEOUS

Spontaneous or informal interpretation is a natural, spur-of-the-moment type of dialogue with individual visitors. The encounters may or may not be planned, but in most instances the questions and information requested by the visitors can be anticipated. This type of visitor contact has more of a natural conversational progression.

The two most common locations for spontaneous interpretation to take place are the park visitor center (see *Module 3—Communications*) and through roving. Roving interpretation is personalized, face-to-face communication where the audience has chosen the venue, the resource is the stage, and the interpreter is the catalyst for knowledge. Roving is planned, personalized communication with visitors in an informal setting. *Module 10—Roving* is devoted to the basic techniques of conducting this type of interpretation.

6.2 PLANNING

We know why we want to provide a good talk. We want to connect the visitor to the resource and to protect and manage that connection within management guidelines. Now we will briefly review how to go about planning and presenting a good talk. As discussed in *Module 4—Planning,* when preparing your talk you must know the park and its significant features and their importance; you must have an understanding of your visitors' needs and motives, and you must incorporate management goals and objectives.

In *Module 5—Programs*, we saw that there are basic building blocks of successful interpretive programs—regardless of the delivery form. To prepare our talk we must conduct thorough research, develop a theme, and prepare an introduction, body, and conclusion.

Preparation is the key to success. Being prepared is the best way to combat nervousness and promote self-assurance. Research and study your topic thoroughly. As you begin to really know your subject, you will gain confidence and eventually reach a point where you will be eager to deliver your talk.

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The knowledge that most of the audience regards you as worth listening to even before you open your mouth should increase your confidence.

Grant Sharpe

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GETTING STARTED

It is much better to outline your talk than to write it out completely. If you do write it out, don't try to memorize it, and don't plan to read it word for word. A canned speech sounds like a canned speech. It is not conversational, friendly, or wise. Interpreters who memorize their speeches are under pressure to remember every line. If they fall out of sequence, they often panic and become completely lost. Forgetting even one word of a memorized speech can be disaster.

If you feel you must write the talk word for word, make an outline, **then throw the written version away.** The outline should consist of your theme and subtheme elements, introduction, transitions, and conclusion. Practice without extensive notes. Use just the major points (subthemes) as your guides. Develop focusing sentences, thematic connectors, and transitions (see *Module 5—Programs*.) Make it your goal to feel comfortable enough with the main points, transitions, and the flow of your presentation that you talk with your audience as if they were friends. **If you must memorize something, limit memorization to the outline, transitions, and your opening and closing statements.**

Another instance when memorizing the script may be beneficial is when using quotes, but be careful. If you use a quote, be accurate; do not paraphrase or misquote the person. Quotes can be extremely powerful, especially when they directly relate to your topic. Incorporating the voice/dialect of the person you are quoting certainly enhances the reality. A good technique is to let historical characters speak for themselves through their letters, diaries, and other documents.

Use note cards sparingly. They may come in handy and be appropriate for your program agenda, long quotes, and/or the basic outline (subthemes) of your presentation, but avoid having too many as crutches. Once again, they may get out of sequence and cause you to panic. Be sure you are talking to your audience and not to your notes.

PRACTICE

Practice is a crucial step in the transition phase between planning your talk and actually delivering it. **There is no substitute for actual practice!** Do not just mentally rehearse, but actually stand up, as if an audience were in front of you, and practice. Go through your entire program, using visual aids and body and facial gestures. Anticipate where and when you will have questions. Visualize yourself walking into the room, introducing yourself, delivering your talk, fielding questions, and concluding the presentation.

A minimum of five rehearsals is recommended, but more are desired. However, be careful not to practice so much that it becomes memorized. If possible, have friends and/or coworkers watch and critique your presentation. If you can, videotape your practice sessions. This videotape, combined with a critique from an outside observer, will allow you to modify and adjust your program more easily. Videotaping and/or recording your talk can be excellent practice techniques.

REHEARSALS TAKE MANY FORMS

- **Personal—**Intellectually and physically work out the progression and details of your talk. Work with your notes, talk to yourself, and go back and forth to work out what words, actions, and props work best. Stop as many times as necessary to make corrections.
- **Technical—**Complete verbal program without full development of props, anticipated Q/A, and costume/uniform.
- **Dress—**Complete program without stopping including props, Q/A, and in costume/uniform. Videotaping this form of rehearsal is beneficial.

Take advantage of every opportunity to practice in front of strangers. Force yourself to speak to groups even if you are really frightened. Even the greatest orators get nervous. They overcome their fear by conscious effort and practice. **You can do the same.** Practice, practice, practice! Through practice and preparation, you will begin to deliver your talk in a more natural manner, as though talking with friends about a subject on which you are passionate.

OVERCOMING STAGE FRIGHT

Stage fright is normal. Almost all of us share this anxiety and fear of speaking in front of an audience. Even the most seasoned professional actor may have a nervous stomach, sweaty hands, tremors in the knees, or an accelerated heart rate before each performance. The trick is to use this excess adrenaline to your advantage. "This kind of 'arousal,' as psychologists call it, makes us more alert, more focused and less likely to forget—even though we feel just the opposite" (Ham, 1992, p. 69). **Recognize that stage fright stress is normal, and make it work for you.** Let the heightened sensitivity and energy fuel a more enthusiastic and dynamic presentation.

Tell yourself to breathe. When your muscles tighten and you are anxious, you may not be breathing deeply enough. Focus on relaxing. Remind yourself that you are prepared. The audience is on your side, and they want you to succeed. Give yourself some flexibility. Do not lock your knees or maintain a rigid posture; move around a little and allow your muscles to release the tension. Moderation is the key, so do not pace wildly back and forth either. Smile and watch the audience smile back at you. We will talk a little about eye contact and body language later in this module, but for now—remember, this anxiety is normal and you can overcome it. (Although you may feel like it, you will not die!)

6.3 PRESENTATION TIPS

Your appearance and demeanor serve to improve your reputation and approachability as a professional interpreter. As mentioned in *Module 3—Communication*, establishing your credibility is important. We will visit this topic again in *Module 13—Professionalism.*

Relax! The audience is on your side.

BENEFITS OF ARRIVING EARLY

Plan to arrive early for your talk. Just how early depends on several factors: location, preparation needs, and familiarity with the venue and potential audience. Arriving early allows you to gain confidence so that you are prepared and ready when it is time to start. Use the time to talk informally with visitors and establish a rapport. It eases your anxiety and lets you learn about your audience. Knowing your audience allows you to personally tailor your presentation and make it more meaningful and relevant. Through personal conversations, you can learn about individual wants, needs, and expectations. Through observation, you can indirectly gather information about the audience, including age, gender, ethnic composition, etc. Understanding your audience is important. Remember Tilden's first principle, "Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile" (Tilden, 1967, p. 9).

First Impressions

First impressions are very important. Your audience begins assessing you the moment they meet you. Arriving at the talk location early helps establish your dependability. Your posture, uniform, and voice reinforce and enhance credibility and confidence. Your eye contact, smile, and warm welcome radiate approachability.

MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION

Just as you will be observing the audience and determining their wants, needs, and interests, they will be assessing your competence, approachability, and professionalism. First impressions are important. Departmental uniform and grooming standards enhance your credibility. The uniform and the regard in which the public holds the Department and its employees lets you begin your talk with a high level of acceptance. Personal habits, voice, enthusiasm, and presentation style can reinforce or shatter the positive respect the audience has for you.

Always exhibit competence, approachability, and professionalism.

Your credibility, personality, competence, and sincerity manifest themselves in your communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal. We communicate a lot of information with our bodies, faces, hands, and posture. When interacting with an individual or a group, always stand up straight, do not slouch. Look at your audience and smile. "Some experts claim that fifty-five percent of understanding from messages is from facial expressions, not words" (Regnier, et al., 1994, p. 26). Avoid distracting mannerisms, such as body swaying, fidgeting, pacing back and forth, hands in pockets fumbling with keys and coins, etc. You communicate positive signals with good posture. Use tasteful, appropriate, and slightly understated hand gestures to punctuate and illustrate points in your program. Do not hesitate to walk toward your audience to focus attention and make personal connections, but be careful not to intimidate them. Once again, be aware of and practice/rehearse good nonverbal skills. In addition, your attitude is extremely important. Assume a friendly, confident, and enthusiastic demeanor. **When you have a positive attitude, all the planning and mechanical details of a talk will come easier and more naturally.**

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An interpreter acts out of authority and humility; confidence and compassion; respect for others and one's own integrity; stability and enthusiasm; and joy. An interpreter treats others with kindness.

Larry Beck and Ted Cable

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Personal Style

How you come across to your audience is influenced by a combination of your environment, education, and personality. We have all inherited characteristics, have been influenced by different experiences, and have a personal "comfort zone." We are unique. When developing your personal style, borrow techniques that you like from other speakers, but do not try to copy them. Let your own personality shine through.

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

Constantly gauge your audience's reaction to determine their level of enjoyment and understanding. Knowing, or at least anticipating, an audience's response will guide you in preparing future programs. Who is this particular audience? Do they understand the language, complexity of issues, and examples that you are using to clarify points? For example, if a large percentage appear to understand only limited English, it would not be effective to present a talk full of terms that they can not understand. As a general guide, plan your presentation for the 8th grade level, and then adjust as needed. If you have practiced your talk and are comfortable with it, you should be able to change it as needed for the group that is before you.

Visitors speaking a foreign language

- **Use a language interpreter if one is available.** Reduce your content by about half to allow for translation time. It is better for the group to understand half of the program well, than to hear it all from you and not understand anything.
- **If you do not have a translator, ask a member of the group to help.** If they do not feel comfortable translating every word, he or she can still be a valuable ally in conveying key concepts. Some individuals are very shy about being in the spotlight. Do not insist if the person asked refuses your invitation to translate.
- **Even scant knowledge of a language is usually appreciated.** Do not be afraid to try out your high school language skills!
- **Use pantomime.** It is fun and often engages the group to try it themselves.
- **Ask how to say something in another person's language, and then repeat it.** Even if (and perhaps especially if) your attempt is clumsy, the group will appreciate you for trying. Good words to start with are "please" and "thank you." Not only will these prove useful, they also demonstrate respect.
- **Build a library of foreign words and phrases that pertain to your topic.** Keep them on note cards and refer to them when appropriate.
- **If possible, touch on topics familiar to them or their country.** (Roth 1998.) For example, German and Swiss visitors are delighted to know that a Swiss German man who brought his culture to America founded Sutter's Fort.

VOICE AND VERBIAGE

Your voice and verbiage are key to conveying that friendly, approachable, personal warmth you want to exhibit. You are not talking at the audience, but with them; there is a huge difference. Try to use the same conversational style in your talk as you would with a group of your friends. Speak clearly, avoid using jargon and scientific terms, and do not forget to breathe. Avoid repeating words or phrases such as "actually," "basically," "like," "um," or "uh."

DEVELOP YOUR VOICE

- **Pleasant**—Conversational, friendly
- **Natural**—Spontaneous and not contrived
- **Audible**—Articulate with appropriate volume
- **Compelling**—Makes audience want to listen
- **Eloquent**—Actively conveys meanings and feelings

In addition to using the style of your voice, there are many ways to enhance the delivery of your talk.

DELIVERING YOUR TALK

- **Rate**—Most people speak 120 to 180 words a minute. Vary the speed at which you talk, but do not speak too fast. A constant rate is monotonous.
- **Pitch**—Tonal variations and volume should also vary. A constant pitch is monotonous.
- **Articulate**—Enunciate so that each word is heard correctly. "Speak clearly; this is particularly important in large reverberant rooms." (Green, 2002)
- **Breathe**—A relaxed voice with controlled breathing is easier to understand and not as stressful for the speaker or the listener. Short sentences with pauses and periods help; don't run on and on.
- **Quality**—Emphasis, force, expression, and clarity make all the difference in the effectiveness of a talk.

Even if you possess a strong, audible voice, you'll want to stay aware of your surroundings and notice any distractions that may make it difficult for the audience to hear. When you are speaking to a large group, or when the ambient noise level is high, a microphone can be a useful tool. If you think you might need a microphone, you probably need one. Don't be afraid to use this tool, get comfortable with it. Many people do not hear as well as you do.

It is important that you face your audience. This directs your voice towards the audience, and if any participants need to, it allows them to lip read or infer what you are saying. Do not have anything in your mouth while you are speaking; items such as gum, a toothpick, or candy can be very annoying and may reduce your ability to enunciate clearly. They also sabotage your credibility and professionalism. The way you express yourself helps your audience to be open and receptive, understand what you are saying, and relate it to their personal experiences. The words and phrases you use make a difference.

Most often, when conveying facts and numbers, it is best to generalize, but there certainly are exceptions. For example, gold was discovered in California in 1848, not the 40s; water freezes at precisely 32 degrees, not the low 30s. Conversely, in many instances, rounding numbers is less tedious and distracting. For example, 397 species of birds should be rounded up to 400 and 14,010 acres should be rounded down to 14,000. Where possible, put numerical information into a context to which the audience can relate. For example, to help them relate to how much food a hawk must eat each day in order to survive, you might say something such as, "A hawk eats half its body weight every day. If I were to do that, I would have to eat 75 pounds of food. Let's see—that is about 150 hamburgers a day!"

It is important that you face your audience and use a microphone when necessary.

All Visitors Welcome addresses another terminology concern, "The recommended way to refer to people with disabilities is to put people first; for example, 'people with hearing impairments.' It is not appropriate to say, 'hearing-impaired people.' It is important to remember that people with disabilities are individuals, who do not all act, think, or move alike. Therefore do not refer to them as 'the disabled,' or 'the mentally retarded,' etc. Do

not use words which are degrading, such as crippled, defect, wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair, invalid, victim of…, or suffering from." (Porter, 1994, p. 7). Think of people first!

> *Living history programs must be authentic and appropriate and must be accompanied by orientation/interpretation for the visitor that allows him or her to have a meaningful interaction with living history presenters. Factors to consider in relation to authenticity and appropriateness of living history programs include such things as interpretive theme(s) and period(s) of the park unit, the individuals selected to fill certain "roles" or characters (age, race, gender, ways of speaking, accents, etc.), and clothing..*
>
> DPR Operations Manual, 0904.6.12.1

FIRST-PERSON CHARACTERIZATION

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In essence, living interpretation involves on-site re-creation of the lives of a people, wearing their clothing, speaking their dialect, reviewing their decisions.

Grant Sharpe

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Besides our actual physical voice, there is another "voice" we can use in our interpretation. The voice of first person interpretation is that of an individual from a specific time or period. This type of interpretation is also known as **living history.** For this to work well, you must **become** the person who lived or visited the site. You must not only look like the character, but your speech, dialect, vocabulary, and style must also be an accurate reflection of that era. "First-person gets under the skin of history." says Stacy F. Roth in her book *Past into Present.* "Its chief advantage over other interpretive choices centers on its ability to add an emotional dimension to the telling of history."

First person interpretation may use a "canned presentation," but more commonly relies on interaction with the audience. When you interact with the audience, you should acknowledge only things from the appropriate time period. For example, you are portraying a rancher's wife baking bread in an adobe oven. An audience member says something about storing bread in the freezer. You know nothing about a freezer, but you could say that the rodents tend to burrow into the basement cold storage area so bread does not store well. **First person interpretation takes**

First-person interpretation generally requires another person to prepare the audience, introduce the character, "set the stage" and close the program. Without someone to provide a cognitive map to the program, visitors may not understand the depiction and may become confused or feel disoriented.

considerable research, concentration, theatrical skill, and practice to stay in character. Although it is one of the most difficult "voices" to master, when performed correctly, first person interpretation can be a powerful presentation tool.

THIRD-PERSON COSTUMED INTERPRETATION

Costumes are great props, but remember to maintain eye contact with the audience.

Third-person interpretation uses a costume and associated items as props for the time period being discussed. The interpreter does not need to become a certain character, and the dialogue and discussion can be in more modern terms. Visitors generally find it easy to interact and ask questions of someone doing third-person, costumed interpretation. Craft and skill demonstrations are certainly enhanced when the interpreter dresses in suitable clothing and uses authentic looking tools and props. Third-person interpretation allows more comfortable interaction with the audience and may be more effective at conveying a given message.

STORYTELLING

The age-old practice of storytelling has been traditionally performed around a campfire, but a good story, well prepared and practiced, can be told any time and anywhere. *Module 8—Campfire* will include a general discussion on storytelling. In this section we will focus our discussion on exercises and techniques for using your voice to full advantage.

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As a storyteller, your goal is to become, for a brief moment, something other than a man or woman standing in front of the room—to create a whole new world using words, sounds, gestures, and expressions. To hear a story is an ancient longing, to tell a story an ancient skill. A well-told story can move you to laughter or tears; it can explain or cause you to ponder the wonders of the universe.

Linda Yemoto and Simone Dangles

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Storytelling Tips and Techniques

- **Relaxation exercises**—Take a moment before starting a story to relax your body. Use exercises to release tension.
- **Humming exercises**—Storytelling and any public speaking require a strong voice. One way to strengthen and not strain your voice is to hum. Try changing the volume, pitch, and expression in your voice as you hum.
- **Different parts of your voice**—It is important to be aware of the different types of sound you can make with the parts of your voice. The nasal long "eee" sound comes from the front of your head or through your nose. The long "aaa" sound comes from the front of your mouth. The "ahhh" from the back of your throat, the "ohhh" from your chest, and the deep short "uuu" from way down in your stomach.
- **Inflection**—Use inflection to keep an audience interested and to sustain a feeling or mood. Drop your voice only at the end of a complete thought.
- **Diction**—The audience must understand your words. Improve your diction by repeating tongue twisters such as, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers."
- **Facial expression**—Practice expressing different emotions, feelings, attitudes, etc., using only your face. Try showing anger, disgust, joy, surprise, excitement, pride, and sadness for a start.
- **Character assumption**—Learning how to "take on a character" is critical in becoming an effective storyteller. Your character may be the narrator of the story, or it may be one of the principal figures in the story.

Adapted from Linda Yemoto and Simone Dangles

STORYTELLING CAUTIONS

- Talking in a monotone
- Using a fake or affected voice
- Talking too fast or meandering verbally
- Using limp or repetitive gestures
- Insulting other cultures
- Teaching misinformation about nature
- Over-anthropomorphizing wildlife
- Telling stories you don't like

Regnier, et al.

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Storytelling is especially important in cultural settings. New stories can and should be developed based on good research. Interpreters need to understand the techniques of storytelling and then develop stories for that location.

Karen Beery,
Interpreter III, CSP

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A second interpreter enhances first person characterization.

Getting Their Attention

Ron Russo, former Chief Naturalist for the East Bay Regional Parks, believes there is a general tendency for all audiences to wander simply because we speak at a slower rate than minds think. People's thoughts drift to new, unrelated areas or different things to do. The physical signs are obvious to the alert interpreter. For example, fidgeting, looking around, talking, and walking away are all symptoms of mental distractions. Following are his suggestions for regaining the audience's attention and keeping it.

Audience Attention Getters:

- **Ask a question…**put them on alert status.
- **Select someone for a little role-playing.**
- **Use a quote.**
- **Pull out a handheld object or tool.**
- **Make a spontaneous discovery—***"Oh, look over there."*
- **Change your facial expression.** Get dramatic!
- **Direct the action.** Stay in charge. You are the producer.
- **Be enthusiastic. Share your excitement at every opportunity.**
- **Recognize and praise someone.** *"Oh, what a great idea…"*
- **Follow their energy and interests.** What appears to be a distraction can be a great discovery, if you make it one.
- **Use pauses and silences to emphasize a point or attract attention.**

Adapted from Ron Russo

Add Pizzazz

There are many ways to stimulate interest and add excitement to your program. An easy attention getter is a sentence that is outrageous, rhymes, or is startling. Say something that really captures the audience's interest and makes them want to listen. You might use foreshadowing, which is an early reference to something that you will talk about later. This teaser adds mystery and suspense, and enhances curiosity. It provokes the audience to listen carefully and solve the problem. A riddle, a brainteaser, or a trivial pursuit challenge helps to heighten interest and encourage interaction. Providing your audience with clues in the body of your talk helps them solve the mystery at or prior to your conclusion. You might use a phrase that is repeated and gains power with each repetition, e.g., "I have a dream." You might use a turnabout; start a line of thinking in one direction and then abruptly change, or you might use a long silent pause.

Incorporate humor into your talk, as long as it relates to your theme. Humor can add lightheartedness to your presentation and help establish RAPPORT. With that said, use humor very carefully. Something that is funny to one person may be offensive to the next. A humorous story about your personal experiences or observations that directly relates to your theme can add insight and humanize your presentation. If the humorous story is to illustrate a point, the "punch line" should not be at your audience's expense. Remember, befriend your guests and make them feel at home and important.

Spice It Up

- **Choose words carefully.** Use active, descriptive words to verbally show an idea, not just tell about it. For example, instead of saying, *"She tried not to indicate how much my words hurt her."* Say, *"As I finished speaking, she lowered her eyes and turned away."* In a whispery voice she said, "Looks like it might rain later."
- **Use descriptive verbs instead of adjectives and adverbs.** For example, you might say, *"The deer ran away scared."* By saying, *"The deer froze, then leaped the fence and bolted across the meadow,"* you paint a much clearer verbal image.
- **Avoid forms of the verb "to be" (is, was, were) whenever possible.** For example the statement, *"It was a dark and stormy night"* doesn't help the audience visualize as much as, *"The storm raged all night; only the lightning lit my way through the forest."*
- **Use active voice for power and strength; use passive for soft, vague effect.** *"The grass was bent low by the wind"* is an example of describing a scene in a passive voice. An example of active voice might be, *"The wind pressed the grass close to the ground."*

- **Use simile or metaphor to enhance your descriptions.** *"The man hopped around and waved his arms,"* is not as descriptive as the following simile: *"The man hopped into the air and waved his arms like a giant prehistoric bird straining to take off into the wind."* Metaphors work well also: *"He was a giant prehistoric bird straining to take off into the wind."*

Adapted from Jane Vander Weyden

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

The technique of questioning involves and intellectually stimulates the audience. Questions can be either open or closed-ended. Open-ended questions entice visitors to share their knowledge, thoughts, and feelings. They ask for opinions and generally stimulate creative thinking and discussion. Closed-ended questions ask for direct, short, factual type responses; e.g., yes/no, or the answer to who, what, or where.

STIMULATE THE AUDIENCE WITH QUESTIONS

- **Focus—**by describing, naming, observing, recalling, etc.
  "Does anyone remember how many eyes I said this tarantula has?"
- **Process—**by analyzing, comparing, explaining, grouping, etc.
  "Do you all see the differences between these two leaves even though they are on the same tree?"
- **Evaluate—**by imagining, predicting, theorizing, extrapolating, etc.
  "How do you think General Vallejo's wife Francisca felt about this?"

It may seem obvious, but when you ask a question, give your audience enough time to answer. Unless you are asking a rhetorical question, you should allow five to 15 seconds for the audience to think about it, formulate an opinion, and verbalize a response. Direct questions to, and encourage responses from, various members of the audience. Do not let one or a few individuals dominate the conversation and interaction. Do NOT put anyone on the spot by directly singling them out, unless you are sure they will be able to answer the question easily.

If no one answers your question, rephrase it or leave it open and answer it later in your talk. Try not to answer your own questions right away. An open question becomes suspenseful foreshadowing. It is important to accept answers gracefully, even if the response is incorrect. "I never thought about it that way…" or "That's an interesting perspective …" are methods of gingerly accepting a **wrong** answer. Use follow-up questioning or rephrasing to gently arrive at the correct answer.

EXAMPLE

You're about to begin a talk on wildlife in the park. You ask the audience, *"What kinds of animals do you think live here at Samuel P. Taylor State Park?"*

A child in the front row immediately answers, *"Tigers!"*

Instead of saying, *"No, you're wrong about that"* a skilled interpreter might answer, *"Good guess! Tigers do like to live in places where there is a thick forest or jungle like we have here at the park. We don't have tigers here, but during my talk, I'll be telling you about the biggest cat that does live here. I'll even show you its pelt so you can feel its fur and see how big its feet are."*

More About Answering Questions

The most important thing to remember is to always rephrase and repeat a question from an audience member. Not only does this help ensure that you understand the question being asked but it gives you a chance to repeat it loudly so that everyone can hear it. Don't assume that everyone heard the question. Keep your group involved by assuming they did not, and rephrasing it and repeating it.

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Success may breed excess. Gratifying and flattering feedback tempts interpreters to do more. However, interpreters must be vigilant against giving the public too much of a good thing. An old showbiz adage says to "leave the audience wanting to come back for more." This is sage advice for interpreters.

Larry Beck and Ted Cable

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If you do not know the answer to a question, do not bluff or fake it. Say you do not know. Ask if anyone in the audience has the answer, and if not, make arrangements to provide the answer at a later time. Many rangers carry park postcards or 3x5 cards in their vehicles or trail bags. The visitor writes down the question, and addresses the card to themselves. The ranger finds out the answer, writes it on the card and posts it in the mail. This is a great way to make someone's day and provide a happy memory after they return home.

Sometimes it is prudent not to answer the question directly. Help the audience discover the answer on their own with a little encouragement from you. If the question will be answered later in your talk, let them know you will be answering it shortly.

Answering techniques are very important. Try to act as if you are hearing the question for the first time. Many times interpreters in a cultural setting get into the habit of explaining everything in the room that they know will be of interest to the visitor. This bores your audience! **Interpreters need to allow the visitors to ask questions.** We need to encourage a conversational style, participatory with the audience, not a lecture. Remember, this is about facilitating connections for the members of your audience.

You have heard the question a thousand times! By the end of the season, you will probably know the question before the audience asks it. Remember, be a good host. It is the first time that particular individual has asked a question, and he/she deserves a clear, courteous answer.

Next we'll be covering the mechanics of a good talk. But first, a final review of the elements needed for a good delivery.

FOR A **GREAT** DELIVERY

- **Incorporate the RAPPORT elements**
- **Put "spark" in your presentation—**The priceless ingredient is love.
- **Smile—**55 percent of communication is unspoken.
- **Vary your voice—**Monotone induces sleep, not interest.
- **Talk with your audience, not at them.**
- **Speak from the heart, not your notes.**
- **Face your audience when speaking.**
- **Exhibit positive body language—**Use appropriate gestures.
- **Don't memorize your talk—Remember your outline.**
- **Make smooth transitions.**
- **Employ good questioning techniques.**
- **Add pizzazz—**Incorporating suspense, mystery, foreshadowing, humor, and active words.
- **Have an ending that punctuates your theme and closes the program.**
- **Remember, stage fright is normal—**Use the energy to your advantage.

Have FUN — it shows!

6.4 MECHANICS

All of your planning and preparation efforts will begin to pay dividends when you actually present your talk. There are several techniques you should employ that will add to your program's success. We will take a moment to look at them.

BEFORE THE TALK

As mentioned earlier in this module, always arrive early. Allow plenty of time to check your equipment, props, and the setting. If you are presenting your talk at a location you are unfamiliar with, such as an off-site speaking engagement, try to visit the location ahead of time. Room layout, location of switches and plugs, audiovisual concerns, etc., should all be addressed long before the actual presentation. If this is a group booked by reservation, the interpreter may want to call ahead to learn about the group's expectations or goals. Arriving early also provides time to socialize and establish a rapport with individuals before they become your audience. You represent California State Parks. Be prepared and set a high standard of excellence.

Think of yourself as the host and the audience as your guests. Have everything ready when your guests arrive. Greet them and exude a warm welcome; a smile is a great charmer. Acknowledge everyone, whether personally or visually; make a connection and offer a welcoming gesture.

Begin your talk on time. Introduce yourself, formally welcome the audience, have an attention grabber, provide information about the theme and subthemes, tell them why you are giving the talk, and present a cognitive map.

AFTER THE TALK

Inviting the visitors to linger and chat is just good manners. You can overtly state that you will remain for a while and are open to discussion. Or you can simply remain in the area and be receptive to the visitors. **A gracious host attempts to satisfy their guests' needs.**

Simply saying "that's all folks" and leaving does not allow for that informal socialization with the interpreter that many visitors crave and on which good interpreters thrive. This kind of interaction helps you evaluate the program's content and your delivery skills. Do not forget to include appropriate evaluation measures.

We will offer some more specific techniques on how to end your talk later in *Modules 7—Walk, 8—Campfire* and *10—Roving.*

IT AIN'T OVER TILL IT'S OVER

- **Evaluate the program** (formal/informal, audience/self).
- **Record interpretive data** (DPR 918).
- **Secure/store/replenish materials and equipment.**
- **Follow-up considerations** (for visitors, staff, self)

PROPS

A good interpreter employs a number of well-chosen tools in an effective talk. **Your voice, your body language, your questioning skills and your enthusiasm are just four of the tools you constantly have available to you.** There are hosts of other aids or props that you can employ to help illustrate and accentuate the theme of the talk. Remember, props are just aids to the presentation. Props help tell the story; they are not the story.

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Activating all the senses creates a holistic experience for the visitor.

Larry Beck and Ted Cable

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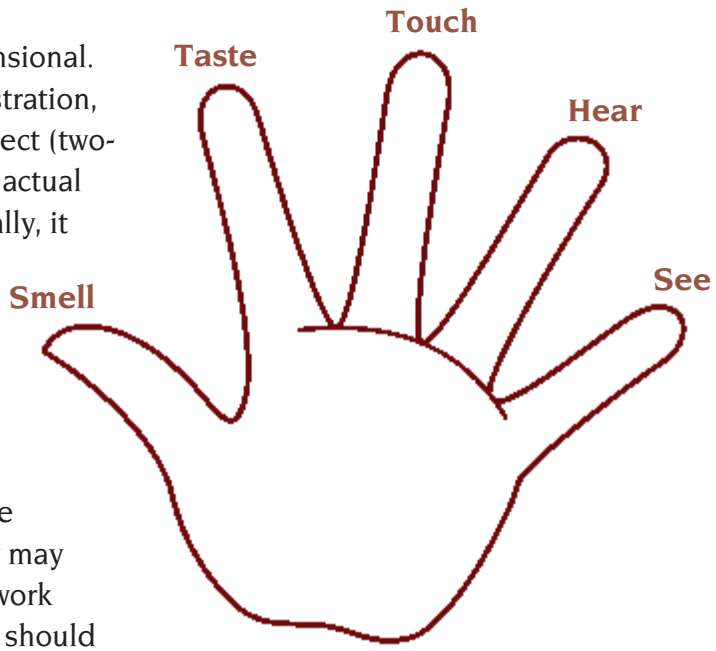
Props can be real items, reproductions, representations, or graphics. Use props to involve all the senses in your talk; incorporate props that can be smelled, heard, touched, tasted, and seen. This will greatly improve theme comprehension and retention. Where possible and prudent, use the real thing. For example, it is much more effective to let the visitors smell the fragrant bark of the Jeffrey pine rather than to tell them it smells like vanilla. Hearing the chimes of the old clock on the mantle helps envision quieter days. Tasting that exquisitely ripe blackberry right off the vine has much more impact than hearing someone's description. We will look at how props can be incorporated to effectively engage the senses and heighten understanding.

Visuals



Visuals may be two- or three-dimensional. For example, you could use an illustration, photograph, digital image of an object (two-dimensional), or you could use the actual object (three-dimensional). Generally, it is much more effective to use the real item rather than a facsimile, but that is not always possible. Some experts believe visual aids increase retention and comprehension by as much as 200 percent. However, if your visuals are poorly designed or displayed, they may draw attention away from you and work against your intended goal. Visuals should function as tools to clarify your theme. They should enhance what you are saying without distracting the audience's attention.

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…the basis for 'ACCLIMATIZING' is natural awareness through use of personal senses (i.e., touching, tasting, hearing, smelling and seeing), using all senses to pursue natural awareness "until we return to that childlike innocence and harmony — only on a higher level" as an adult.

Bill Krumbein and Linda Leyva

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Illustrations

Projected images are common visual aids that make graphics large enough for all to easily see. We will cover how to prepare a multi-media presentation in more detail in *Modules 8—Campfire* and *11—Audiovisual.* Let us discuss how other illustrations can support your theme.

Select your illustration prop carefully. First and foremost, make sure that all of your audience can see it clearly. It may seem obvious, but pictures, posters, maps, and other visual aids must be large enough for your audience to see. Limit the amount of information you present with any one visual aid. For example, limit the text to a line or two on any one graphic. Too much reading becomes too much like school. If you do use

text, the font size and style of the letters should be appropriate for the visual. Use a sans serif font, one that is easy to read such as Arial. Avoid using complicated graphs and charts, because they are too difficult to decipher at a glance. Incorporate extra lighting, projection devices, magnifying glasses, etc., to enhance visual acuity.

Objects

When using handheld objects, be sure the background and lighting are suitable. Hold the object steady, generally at shoulder level, and deliberately point out features and details. Slowly rotating objects allows for visual relationships to be grasped. If the item has a human use, you should show or pantomime that use. Appeal to the audience's imagination where possible. Ask questions about the item to engage their thoughts. For example, you are showing the audience an antique apple peeler that was a common tool in 19th century farm life. It is a complicated combination of wheels, cogs, and prongs. Ask if anyone knows what this tool might have been used for. Provide clues to help them guess correctly; a bowl of apples nearby may just do the trick! Then actually peel an apple or use gestures to indicate how the tool was used. If appropriate, invite a volunteer from the audience to try it. Have them comment on how hard or easy it is to use.

References

Field guides, local flora and fauna keys, architectural digests, "how to" manuals, copies of diaries and letters, and other topic-related references provide visitors opportunities to discover details. Having these in your "kit bag" of tools is appropriate and professional.

Let the visitor know where they can buy or download the reference if they desire. This practice helps increase the take-home value of your program. Is the item for sale in your visitor center? Even better! If an item is good enough to use as a reference in your program, the visitors may very well benefit by having one of their very own.

Audio

Incorporating sound into your talk certainly enhances another dimension of understanding. Stopping to listen to the natural or ambient sounds should be a normal occurrence for the seasoned interpreter. You can enhance the audience's ability to hear sounds with various techniques and tools. Have visitors cup their hands near their ears, or put their ears to the ground or tree and listen intently. Ask everyone to close their eyes and listen to often unheard sounds. In this all-too-busy world, the art of just listening to the tick of a clock, bird song, or rushing water can be a powerful experience.

Use mechanical devices such as mp3 players, tablets or cell phones; stethoscopes; bat detectors; or parabolic recorders to capture or play sounds not normally heard by visitors. Use all the tools available to improve the experience and illustrate the theme.

Smell

Inviting your audience to experience the aromas of the environment is another effective presentation tool. The stuffiness of the cellar, the pungency of creosote, or the musk of the elk are all smells the visitor will not soon forget. How you employ and deliver these and other smells requires careful planning and forethought. Keeping the cellar door closed, rubbing the leaves of the creosote, or bottling the musk oil of an elk are all ways to incorporate smell stimuli into the interpretive experience.

Reduce your audience's anxiety by modeling how to smell the item. **Instead of simply handing the person something to smell, show them how to approach it.** Any time you ask the audience to do something, always demonstrate it first. For example, instead of telling the audience to stick their noses in the Jeffrey pine bark, simply walk up to the tree, hug it, put your face right up to the tree, take a deep breath, and say "ahhhhhh." Once they know it is safe, they will be far more relaxed and willing to experience the smell.

> *What's ambrosia to one, stinks to another. As with all audience considerations, use good judgment, and do not force, shame, or embarrass anyone into smelling, tasting, or touching any of your props.*

Taste

Tasting things is a tricky proposition. To the untrained eye, plants that are poisonous may easily be confused for safer ones. In addition, tasting things in front of children often sets a precedent that could be dangerous. Carefully choose the tastes you share with visitors. Done wisely, there are life experiences to be had! For example, that city dweller who tastes a ripe wild huckleberry may now be able to understand why a bear is so focused. Someone who has never tasted a cattail "corncob" may finally understand how innovative the hunter/gatherer cultures were.

Taste is more difficult to incorporate into your talk than the other senses. It is difficult to do effectively, a little scary, and may not always produce the desired effect. But when you use it and it works, you just may have connected the visitor with the resource in a way they will never forget.

TASTING IN THE WILD

- **Do not encourage tasting unless you are absolutely sure it is edible and safe.** Not even a small piece.
- **Just because animals eat it doesn't mean you can.**
- **Harvest with respect to the resource and the law.**
- **Explain to visitors why and how you are ethically harvesting.** For example, advise your audience to take only every fifth blackberry to ensure enough for others, for animals, for reseeding, etc.
- **Just because it tastes good does not make it safe.**
- **Always give a warning about look-alikes and dangers of eating in the wild.**

Touch

Incorporating tactile sensation is extremely successful at reinforcing messages. For example, touching the ground to test the temperature with one hand in the sun and the other in the shade clearly illustrates the difference a tree can make. The rough texture of bark or the smoothness of polished marble cannot be explained any better than by touch. Touching the hairs on plants shows how they manage to "hitchhike" on your socks and disperse widely.

Touch is a powerful sensory stimulus.

ENGAGE AND INVOLVE THE AUDIENCE

Now that you've selected props/aids/specimens that are large enough to be seen and relevant to your talk, put them in their order of appearance so you won't be digging around in front of your audience. Keep them hidden until you are ready to exhibit them. This provides suspense and lessens distractions. When using props, do not get into the "this is a…and this is a…" mode of explaining the objects. **Remember, good presentation techniques include transitions, foreshadowing, questioning, and relevance to theme.** If the prop doesn't support your theme, it doesn't belong in the program.

Continue to talk to the audience when you use props. Maintain eye contact with the visitors, not your props. Glance at the prop occasionally to identify points of interest and to add emphasis. Use slow, deliberate hand movements to identify features and make sure you do not block anyone's view.

Whenever possible, let visitors feel, smell, and handle the objects you are discussing. When passing objects through the audience, consider waiting until everyone has had a chance to experience it before moving on. If the group is large, however, this may not be an option.

Handout materials are good tools to help engage and involve the audience, but distribution is an issue. Handouts may be beneficial for providing supplemental information and helping with recall at a later date. They also offer some take-home value. How and when you distribute the handout materials requires forethought and good techniques. Distributing the material at the start of the talk may relax the audience and make them more receptive to listening, but might also distract their attention away from your presentation. Passing the materials out during the talk may clarify or help illustrate your theme, but the timing and continuity of your presentation may be thrown off. Waiting until the end of the program may reinforce your presentation and provide additional information, but might also just be something that distracts from your strong conclusion. Use handouts wisely.

KIT BAG

Props, aids, gadgets, and all sorts of paraphernalia help the interpreter reveal the true essence of the story. Over time, interpreters develop their own personalized kit bag of tools with items that work for them for any given situation, topic, and location. Freed and Shafer list 66 items they suggest could go into your kit bag, and Krumbein includes 74 cultural and historic items. Both articles are certainly worth reviewing. Other information on interpretive techniques can be found in *The Interpreter's Guidebook* (Regnier, et al., 1994).

Tricks of the trade

Every interpreter will have special issues and concerns to address. Many times we develop props that work specifically to illustrate a point. For instance, California State Parks Interpreter Michael Green works in historic structures where marble is abundant, Michael realized visitors instinctively want to feel the smooth, cool marble, so he carries a piece of marble in his kit bag which he invites everyone to touch. Over the years, the oils from all this touching has discolored the demonstration marble, offering a perfect opportunity for Michael to explain why we ask visitors not to touch the marble walls.

Whether you use an all-purpose day pack, a treasure trunk, or an under-the-counter drawer to store your kit bag of tools, you will find that you constantly draw on them to help illustrate your talk.

Props allow visitors to see, touch, hear, smell and feel the people or objects you are talking about..

ACCESSIBILITY

As a good host, we must always consider accessibility when presenting a program. Accessibility is often thought of in terms of providing physical access to facilities. "The Americans with Disabilities Act not only addresses the issue of physical access to buildings, but also considers the need for equally effective communication with people with disabilities and program accessibility" (Porter, 1994, p. 53). "It means being able to get to the door, through the door, to the second floor, and to participate, independently, and with dignity" (Stensrud, 1993, p. 103).

As state parks interpreters, we "must ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with others"... "Good interpretation always relates the message to the audience, communicating in a way that is both understandable and provocative to the individual listener. This requires that the interpreter be sensitive to the interests and special needs of the entire audience" (Porter, 1994, pp. 53-55). In *All Visitors Welcome*, you will find information that looks beyond the federal and state laws for accessibility. You will also find ways to more effectively communicate with a diverse audience (Porter, 1994).

As the interpreter, it is your responsibility to be familiar with and follow the "letter of the law" for program accessibility. Provide programs where all visitors are included in the interpretive talk. Personal integrity and professionalism also dictate that you embrace the "spirit of the law" with your best interpretive efforts. Incorporate accessibility along with all of the elements of RAPPORT for all members of the audience.

EVALUATE

How do you know you are a good interpreter? How do you assess whether the audience is enjoying, understanding, and learning from your talk? Self-evaluation should be a continual routine. You should always strive to improve on your last visitor interaction. In *Module 12—Evaluation,* we will thoroughly discuss self-evaluation and other assessment tools in detail.

For now, watch your audience for clues. Earlier in this module, we discussed the signals you send with your body language. Your enthusiasm, attention to detail, and confidence help the audience appreciate and benefit from your presentation. Once you become comfortable with your information and your techniques, put your attention into watching your audience and adjusting your presentation as needed.

Gather Formative Feedback **During** the Program

Are audience members:

- Smiling, applauding, and laughing at the appropriate times?
- Attentive and making eye contact with you?
- Sharing their knowledge and opinions, and being actively involved in the program?
- Asking questions based on their enlightenment?
- Participating when asked?

Or are they:

- Fidgeting, distracted, or having other conversations while you are talking?
- Constantly asking you to clarify what you said?
- Leaving before the talk is over?
- Not looking at you?

Gather Summative Feedback **After** the Program

Did your audience:

- Linger and visit, ask questions, and cheerfully interact with you?
- Look at or take materials you offered as additional information?
- Thank, compliment, or ask you about other program opportunities?

Or did they:

- Leave immediately.
- Ask questions you thought you had already addressed in the talk?
- Seem confused about the subject?

Reading body language is an imperfect art. Body language varies based on culture, the person, and the place. In addition, body language signals may have more than one meaning. When evaluating a situation, you should incorporate as many clues as possible. For example, if one person is distracted, your program may be just fine. But if several people are not paying attention, you may need to revise your presentation's content, style, or methods.

This gut-level, traditional evaluation method has benefits and pitfalls. It is extremely important that you also use the scientific methods we'll discuss later to accurately assess your performance

BIAS AND "TRUTH"

Dealing with bias and the "truth" can be difficult. Bias is prejudice, and each individual's truth is in the "eye of the beholder." Bias can be overt or unintended, verbal or nonverbal, and in written or graphic form. For example, you may be exhibiting personal communication bias

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Our job is to integrate these various truths into the whole truth, which should be our only loyalty.

Abraham Maslow

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by addressing your comments exclusively to the men in your audience, not making eye contact with individuals with physical disabilities, or not directly addressing a person of a particular ethnic group. To become excellent interpreters, we must constantly strive to identify and remove bias from our presentations. NPS interpretive training Module 201 offers the following forms of bias, prejudice, and stereotyping. If you recognize any of these in your style, take the time to make changes.

- **Speaker's point of view**—From what perspective does the interpreter speak? What assumptions does she/he make about the topic and audience?
- **Pronoun usage**—Are masculine pronouns used when referring to gender-neutral objects? Are feminine pronouns used diminutively?
- **Euphemisms**—Are euphemisms used to diminish the import of sensitive or controversial issues e.g., slaves/servants?
- **Terminology**—Are terms used with cultural sensitivity?

NONVERBAL

- **Eye contact**—With whom does the interpreter make the most eye contact?
- **Body language**—What does body language communicate about accessibility/inaccessibility or interest/disinterest?
- **Gestures**—How are gestures used to prompt or silence members of the audience? To communicate interest/disinterest?
- **Positioning**—Where does the interpreter spend the most time?
- **Inclusion**—Who gets called upon? With whom does the interpreter spend time? What questions are asked of different students/visitors?

Interpretive Development Plan, National Park Service

Truth, especially in the cultural sense, is determined by the historical context in which it occurred. Remember in *Module 2—Purpose and Value* we discussed that **history is not a fact, but rather an interpretation of the event by the person who recorded it, the time in which it occurred, and those of us who are listening to it today.** As more historical information is discovered, the interpretation of that event is altered. There are always many perspectives from which to tell a story. Be careful that you accurately reflect the culture and the historic facts and are not simply playing into stereotypes. Avoid dogmatic

certainty when interpreting a historical event. When you incorporate qualifiers such as: *"Based on what we now know…"* or "*It appears that…"*, you will provide the caveat for additional "truths" to be discovered.

PUBLICITY

By now, you have prepared a wonderful interpretive program, but you need an audience! Informing your potential audience about the when, where, and why of your program is extremely important to its success or failure. There are many ways to "get the word out." A personal invitation from park staff, especially you, is the most powerful. Advertising on park bulletin boards, through white boards at the entrance station, and media announcements are very effective.

Activity Schedules

How will you let visitors know about your program?

Design activity schedules with the visitors in mind. Do not forget that staff, including volunteers, other agencies, the media, and other audiences will also use them. This does not mean that the program announcement should look like a timetable. Your program title should make people curious and want to attend your program. The title should convey the essence of your theme, if not the theme itself. The write-up should be short, enticing, and informative.

Your audience is in great part determined by the way you advertise your programs. **All activity schedules should include the three Ws: what, when, and where. Then incorporate the four Cs: clear, concise, correct, and compelling.** Use active, eloquent, and positive statements to describe your program offering. Select words that are exciting, informative, and hint at the mysteries of the topic. Words such as discover, explore, reveal, realize, unearth, etc., are likely to entice visitors to attend. Terms such as study, learn, investigate, and research do not sound like fun to most people who are on vacation. Don't make your program sound like scholarly work unless you are specifically seeking a very small audience with a singular passion.

Here is an example of an activity announcement for one day. Other announcements on the page should have similar formatting.

EVENTS

Saturday, May 26

10:30 a.m. - Walk
Indians, Explorers, & Settlers: 400 year conflict **1 hour**
Join volunteer Lee Smith on a moderately difficult 1-mile amble, exploring sensitive locations that have experienced cultural clashes for centuries. The walk begins in front of the visitor center. Bring water and wear comfortable walking shoes.

3 p.m. - Junior Rangers
Peninsular Bighorn Sheep - Myths and Marvels **1 hour**
Children ages 7-12 are invited to join ranger Chris Doe investigating the life, legends, and amazing mysteries of the largest park mammal. Meet at the campfire center.

7:30 p.m. - Campfire
Bats of Borrego and Beyond **1 hour**
Bats are in the air, everywhere! Join interpreter Geri Jones for a bat patrol at the Mott Campfire Center. Discover why these mysterious night hunters are disappearing, why that is bad, and how you can help save them.

Media Releases

To attract the local public and a wider audience than might otherwise attend, advertise your interpretive programs outside of the park. The Department's media guide provides direction, structure, and format assistance when writing these Public Service Announcements (PSAs). In addition, most districts have a Public Information Officer (PIO) who will be able to assist you. Putting the what, when, where information in the beginning paragraph is always prudent. Use PSAs for all media including newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Work with your PIO to develop a good working relationship with your local media. Know the type of information they desire and what their deadlines are.

Advertise your interpretive programs through the local media.

Websites and Social Media

Websites and social media are essential outlets for promoting your programs. Think about the websites, web event calendars, and kinds of social media your potential visitors might use and make the most of them. The California State Parks website is also a great place to post invitations to your programs and events. Upcoming activities are often listed on the landing page, exposing your programs to a world-wide audience.

Personal Invitations

It is worth repeating that the finest and most direct method to publicize your interpretive programs is through warm, sincere, and personal invitations. Do not forget to occasionally invite the local media to your programs. Extend personal invitations to visitors while they are attending another program, or while passing by staffed entrance stations, visitor centers and park offices. If possible, walk through the campground and personally invite visitors about an hour before the program begins. You can also extend invitations during casual chance meetings and while roving. Since only about 20 percent of park visitors attend our formal programs and visitors may ignore bulletin boards, your personal communication may be the only way some visitors learn of the park's interpretive program offerings. Be a good host.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

Our next module will help you develop your skills for conducting a walk, which is nothing more than a "moving talk." A walk offers you the chance to directly introduce the visitor to the resource. It can take many forms. We will take a close look at how to lead an exciting, effective, engaging walk.

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Module 6

TALKS

SELF ASSESSMENT

Answer each question in the section below before reviewing the material in *Module 6—Talks*. The answers are not provided. Check your answers with your colleagues and as you read *Module 6—Talks*. Items from the self assessment may be reviewed and discussed in class.

1) Which of the following should not be memorized when preparing for a talk?

   a) Introduction

   b) Transition sentences

   c) Outline

   d) Body of the presentation

2) Writing out a complete script for a talk is a good way to practice. (Explain your answer.)

   a) True

   b) False

3) Name three different general types of interpretive talks.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4) List two ways to help alleviate stage fright.

1. _____
_____

2. _____
_____

5) On average, _____ of the understanding from messages comes from facial expressions.

a) 25%

b) 35%

c) 45%

d) 55%

6) Which is a recommended practice for dealing with visitors speaking a foreign language?

a) Make no modifications

b) Use popular slang

c) Incorporate pantomime

d) Simplify the content

7) How does first person "living history" differ from third person, costumed interpretation?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

8) Circle all of the following that are recommended strategies for developing storytelling techniques.

a) Humming exercises

b) Memorizing the stories you tell

c) Relaxation exercises

d) Practicing different facial expressions

9) Props are a necessary part of every interpretive presentation.

a) True

b) False

10) List four types of props.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

11) Reproductions of authentic objects should never be used in programs.

a) True

b) False

12) Which of the following are appropriate methods of publicizing programs. (Circle all that apply.)

a) Bulletin boards

b) Personal invitations

c) Media releases

d) Entrance station handouts

e) Web-based announcement

Now that you have completed the self assessment questions, review the material in *Module 6—Talks* to confirm your answers. After reading the module, move on to the workbook learning activities, which will assist you in developing your skills.

WORKBOOK LEARNING ACTIVITIES

To help you review and apply the material covered in *Module 6—Talks,* a selection of review questions and/or activities is provided. Again, no answers are included. Use the material from the module, outside sources, and your colleagues to help you complete the activities and answer the questions. There may be more than one right answer. Use the questions and activities to generate discussion about the material. Be prepared to discuss, perform, or demonstrate your answers in class.

1) Much of what we interpret for the public is factual information about our resources. Making numbers, dates, and other detailed facts understandable and interesting to visitors is a key part of "interpreting" the information. How could you interpret the following concepts for an audience?

Temperatures can reach 115° degrees Fahrenheit.

_____

_____

_____

The tallest redwood is more than 360 feet tall.

_____

_____

_____

The nearest town is 200 miles away.

_____

_____

_____

The lake is 250 feet deep.

_____

_____

_____

This park has 450 miles of trails.

Gold was first discovered in 1848.

Eighty-six million people visit California State Parks each year.

It happened more than 250 million years ago.

California State Parks has more than 275 park units.

Dragonflies can lift seven times their body weight.

Phalaropes fly 2,000 miles from Canada to South America in 2 days.

From 1850 to 1880, 75 million buffalo were killed.

2) With a classmate, practice the introduction and conclusion you prepared in the "Taking it to Your Park" section of *Module 5—Programs*. Give each other feedback on body language, facial expressions, and the other elements listed on page 6-9 of the Basic Interpretation Handbook. How could you improve? What did you do well?

3) List ten items you might include in a kit bag of tools for the talk you are preparing for your park.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

4) Develop a 15-second PSA radio spot for your talk.

_____
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Take it to YOUR Park

Answer each question with the information specific to your park. You will have to conduct some research in order to answer each question. Use the answers as a guide for enhancing your career in California State Parks.

TALKS

Park name _____

1) Brainstorm another potential theme for a program in your park. From your brainstormed list, circle the items that are tangible and underline those that are intangible. Write these two lists below.

2) Now identify the subject (topic), target audience, and purpose of the program. Create a theme that if possible, contains both a tangible and an intangible element. Write your theme below.

3) Outline your ideas for the talk.

4) List four ways you could engage visitors with the resources being interpreted.

1. _____
_____

2. _____
_____

3. _____
_____

4. _____
_____

5) Design two ways to publicize the program.