



GUEST PRESENTATIONS



MADE EASY

Interpretation Workshop

Why Interpret?

- The value of a story
- Sharing the mission
- Improving guest experience
- Promoting conservation
- Using effective tools



What is Interpretation?

- *“Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent to the resource.”*

National Association for Interpretation



Guiding Principles

Connecting Tangibles to Intangibles during your Presentation



Effective Interpretation Connects Tangibles to Intangibles

Tangibles

- Sharks
- Horn/antler biofact
- Enrichment item in enclosure



Intangibles

- Role of predators in nature
- Wildlife survival strategies
- Quality animal care



Activity: Tangible vs Intangible

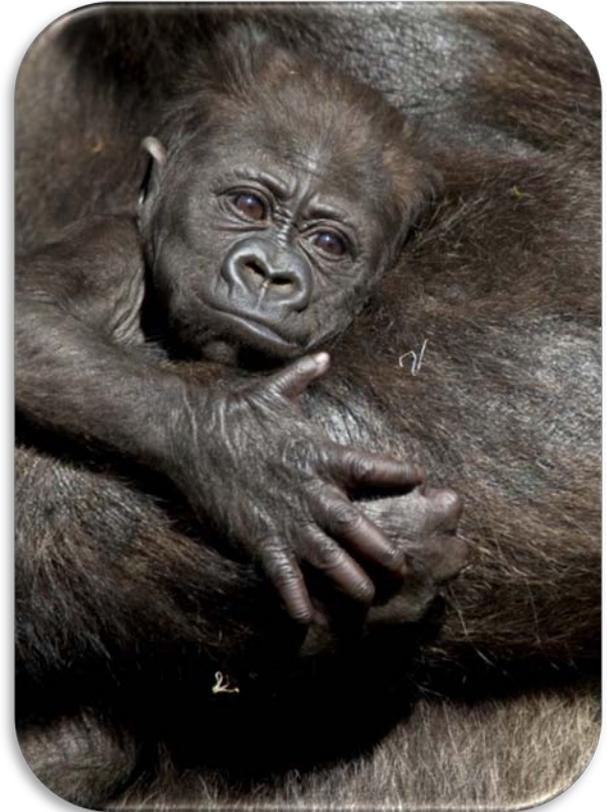


Tilden's Principles of Interpretation

- Any interpretation that does not relate to what is being displayed or described will become sterile to visitors.
- Information is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. All interpretation includes information.
- The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
- Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part.
- Interpretation addressed to children (to age twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults. To be at its best, it will require a separate program.

Interpretation is....

- Connecting
- Understanding
- Explaining
- Translating
- Bridging
- Discovering



POETRY

What does this mean?

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- Purposeful
- Organized
- Enjoyable
- Thematic
- Relevant
- You!



Poetry

Interpretation has Purpose

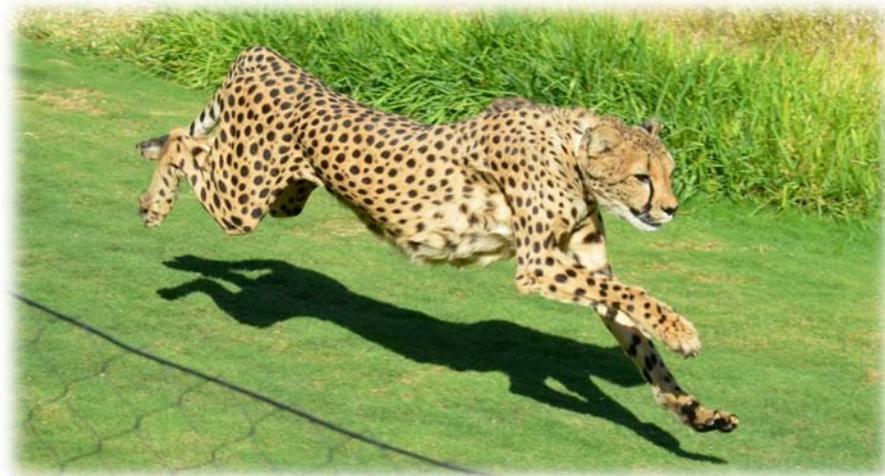
The Goals of Environmental Interpretation



Interpretation has...

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- Guests have varying levels of knowledge and commitment.
- We are encouraging them up the “conservation continuum”.



Promoting Awareness

- Curiosity (What is this about?)
- Awareness (I didn't know this before!)
- Understanding (I think I care...)
- Caring about the resource (I want to help!)
- Caring for the resource (I will help.)



Your Presentations

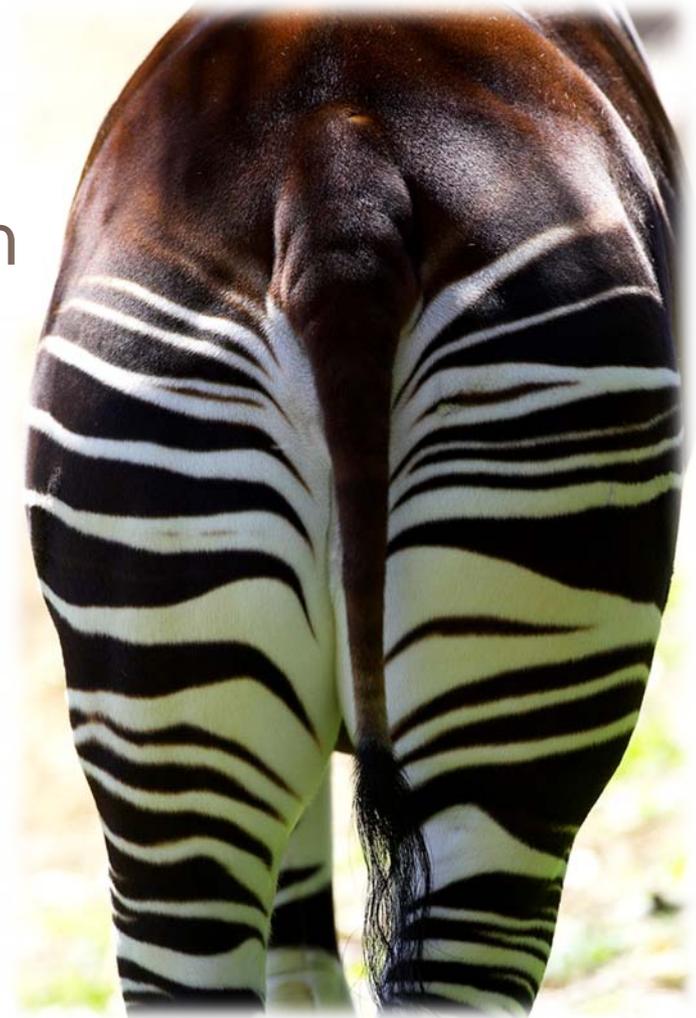
Goals: A Real Life Example





Guests will...

- Have fun!
- Care more
- Learn about your organization
- Be empowered
- Develop skills
- Take action
- Connect
- Get involved



Inspiration vs. Information

- Communicating for Conservation Action
 - ▣ Target specific behaviors
 - ▣ Remove barriers to taking action
 - ▣ Use the power of people: social norms and respected role models
 - ▣ Use incentives to tip the motivational balance
 - ▣ Elicit public pledges



Action Message

- Recycle everything you can.
 - ▣ Effects of climate change
 - ▣ Reduction in the production of greenhouse gasses which contribute to climate change
 - ▣ Recycling as the new social norm



Action Message

- Choose to re-use
 - ▣ Explain the positive effects
 - ▣ Serve as a role model
 - ▣ Remove barriers



Action Message

- Donate to conservation efforts.
 - ▣ Conservation projects and the importance of guests' support
 - ▣ Ways that guests can donate



Presenting Action Messages

- Make the action suggestion late in the presentation.
- Maintain an upbeat tone.



Information That Matters



Delivering Too Much Information

- Information overload!
- They will leave...
- Decreased ability to relate

...can weigh up to 5,000 lbs

...from Asia

...eats 15 lbs of food a day

...arboreal

...grows antlers

...loss of habitat

...poached

...blah, blah

...crepuscular

...4 month gestation

...endangered

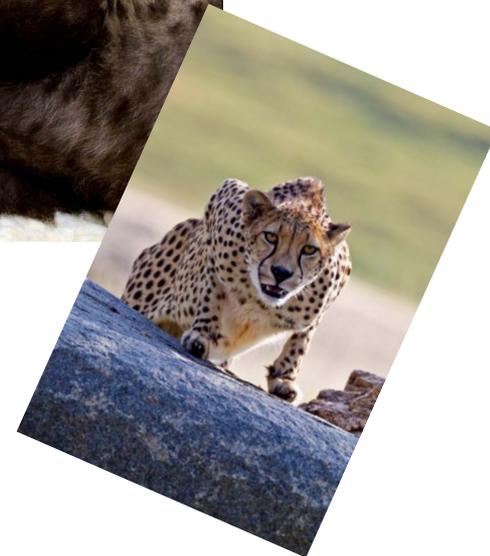
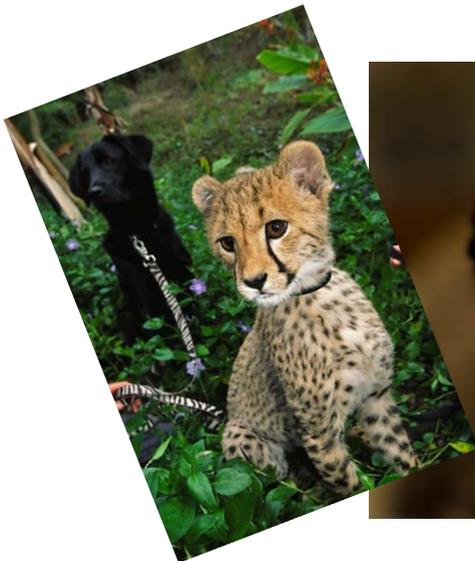
...4 month gestation

...blah

...why doesn't anybody care?

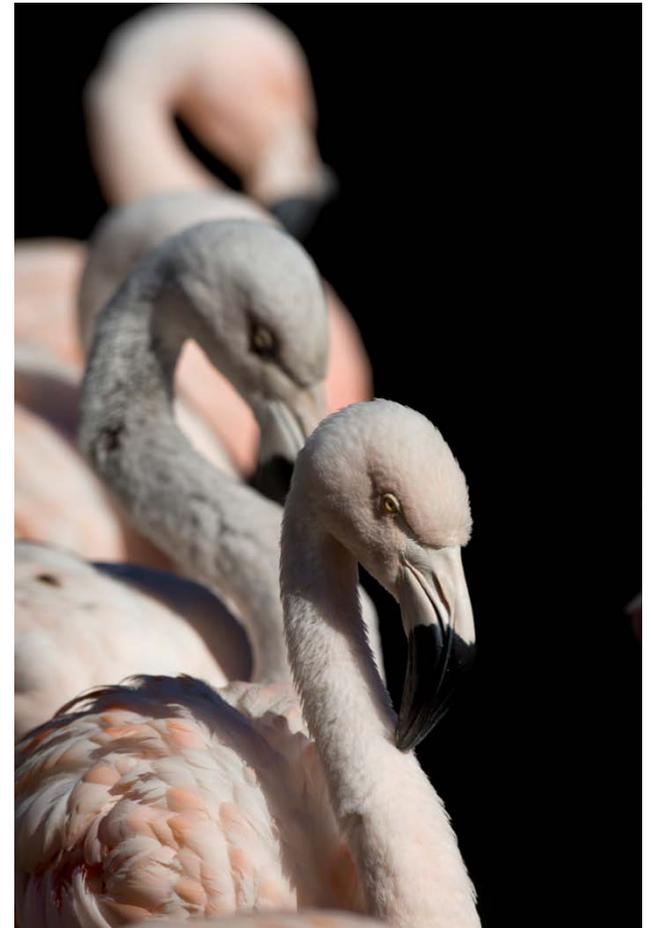
Choosing Effective Information

- Consider mission, resource, audience
- Connect to your theme/subtheme
- Numbers and data are forgotten
- Avoid doom and gloom

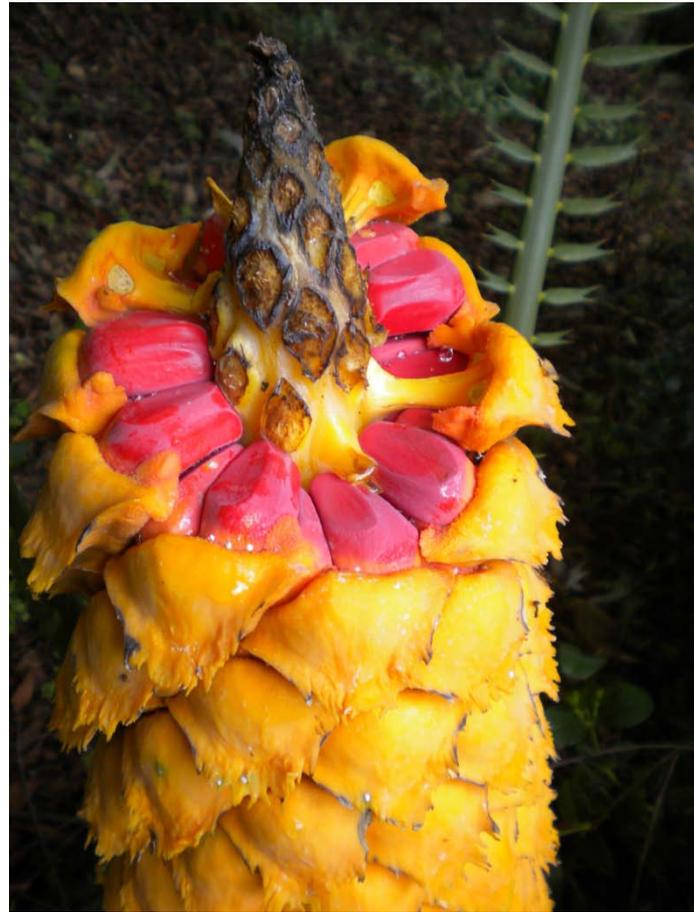


Using Appropriate Information

- Accurate vs. Appropriate
- Focus on the positive
 - ▣ Be the role model
- Use gentle humor...
Sparingly



Resources and Approval Process



Do your homework!

Interpretation is Organized

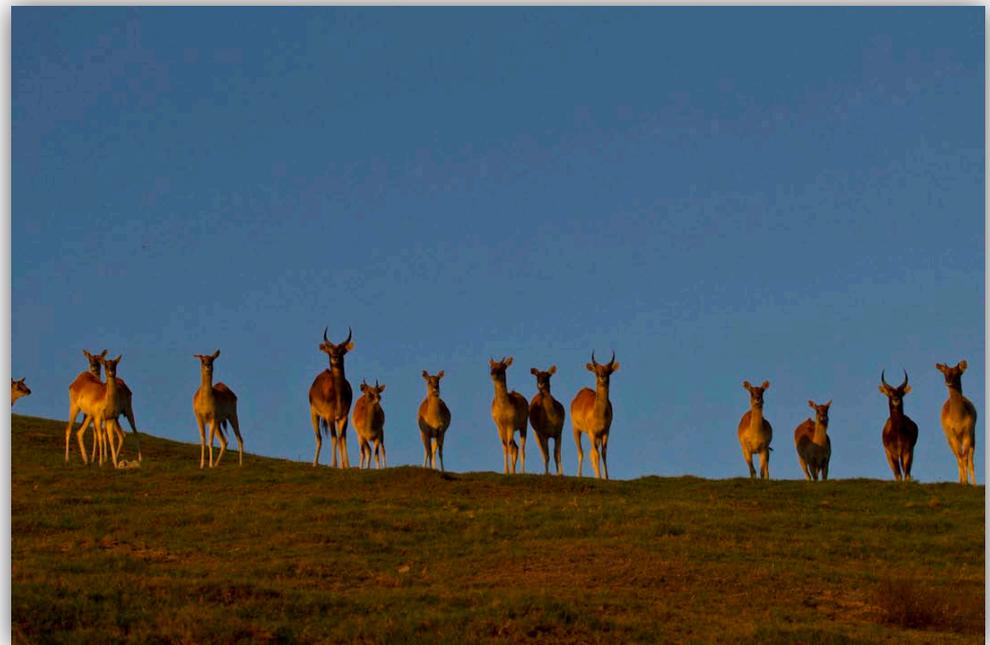
The Narration: Putting it All Together



Interpretation is...

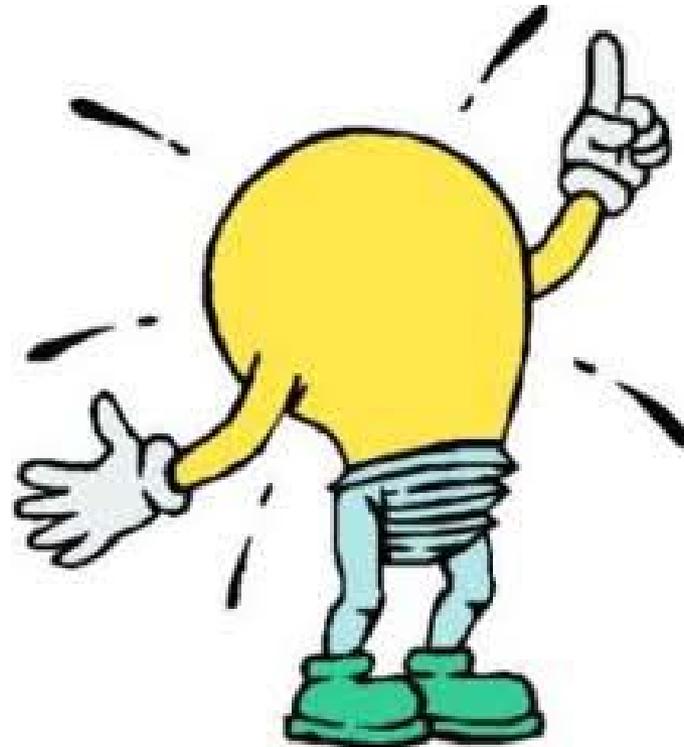
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- Want to be “wowed”
- You are the “matchmaker”
- Help them care



Theme

- Main Message
 - “What did you learn?”



A human touch

- Make it personal
- Speak their language
- Use humor to set the tone
- Let your passion show
- Introduce memorable animals individually
- Pause for reflection



Tangible links

- Always lead with what the guests are experiencing.
- Conservation stories are special cases.



Real understanding

- Make sure they see what you see
- Provide conceptual hooks
- Actively engage guests
- Use the familiar to explain the unfamiliar



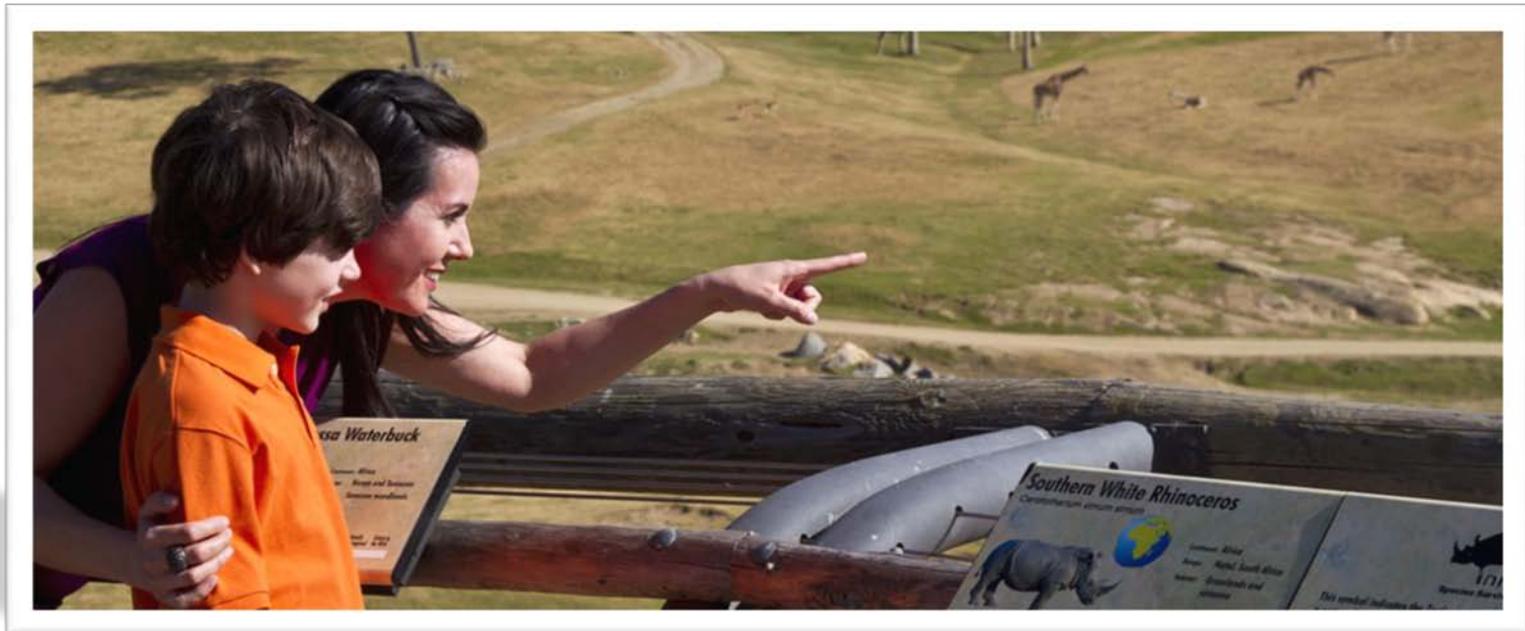
Conservation connections

- What do they see? → What is the story?
- Goal = Understanding the power of choice
- Use your organization as a role model.



A Meaningful Structure

- Introduction
 - ▣ Welcome
 - ▣ Rules/procedures
 - ▣ Set the stage



A Meaningful Structure

- Body
 - ▣ Lead with something you can see
 - ▣ Stories of adaptations
 - ▣ Conservation challenges
 - ▣ Conservation projects



A Meaningful Structure

- Conclusion
 - ▣ Caps off the experience
 - ▣ Recaps the experience briefly
 - ▣ Repeat the main message
 - ▣ Thank guests
 - ▣ Remind them to take action



Making Interpretation Enjoyable

How to Educate While Entertaining



Interpretation is...

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- Non-formal audiences

**We're on
vacation!**



Knowing Your Audience

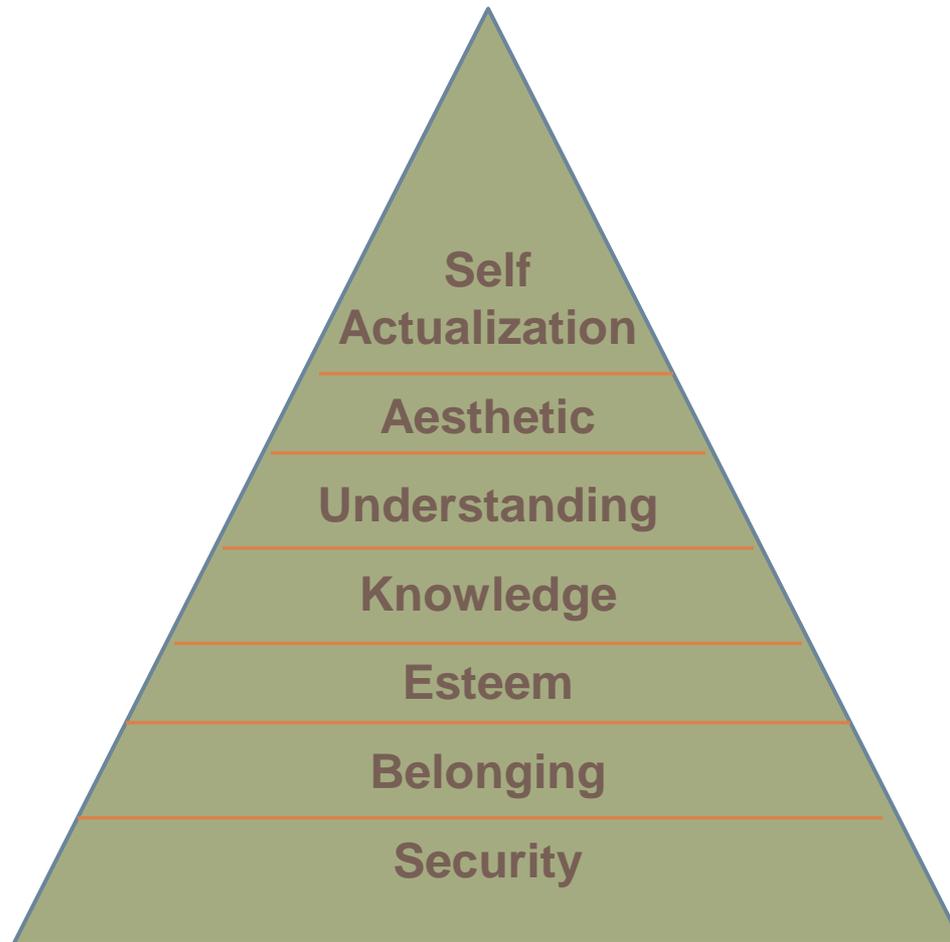
A large orange thought bubble with two smaller ones below it, containing the text "Who am I trying to reach?".

Who am I trying to reach?

- Key Characteristics of Non-Formal Audiences
 - ▣ Have little or no time commitment
 - ▣ Do not have to pay attention
 - ▣ Expect an informal atmosphere
 - ▣ Will leave if bored.

Maslow's Hierarchy:

Understanding What Every Visitor Needs

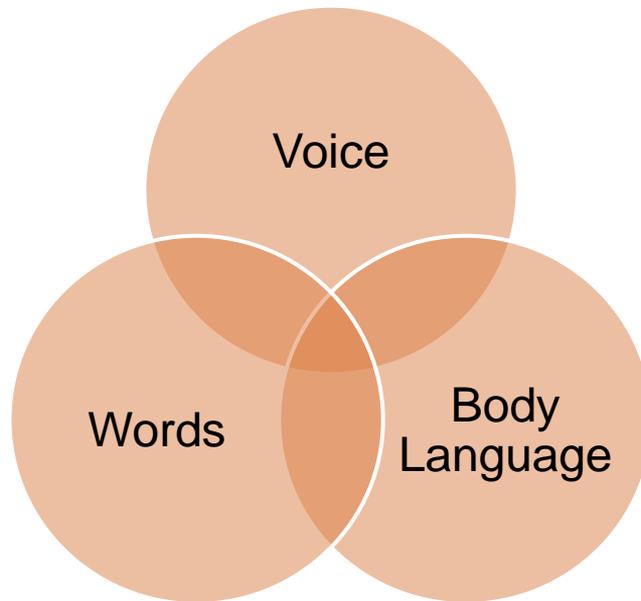


Interpreting for Different Audiences

- In general, speak simply
- Ask questions, and listen
- Be creative
- Tell a story
- Promote curiosity
- Be positive
- Engage their senses
- Show interest in what they are interested in
- Enjoy the experience and SMILE!

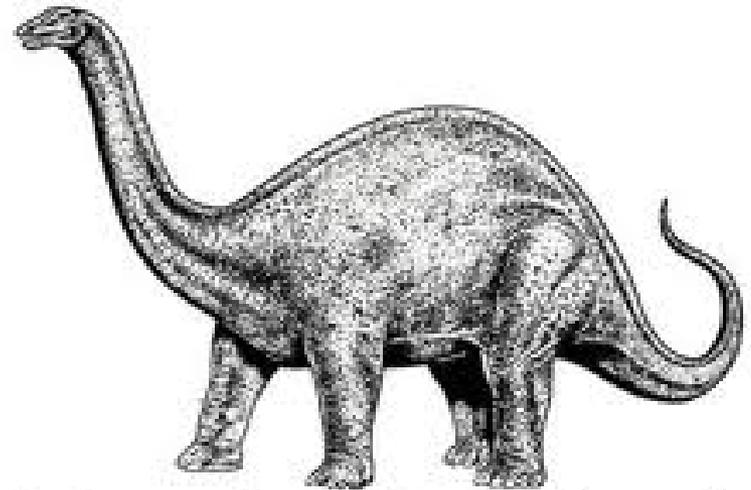
Communication

- Effective Interpretation Starts with Effective Communication.



Communication: Words

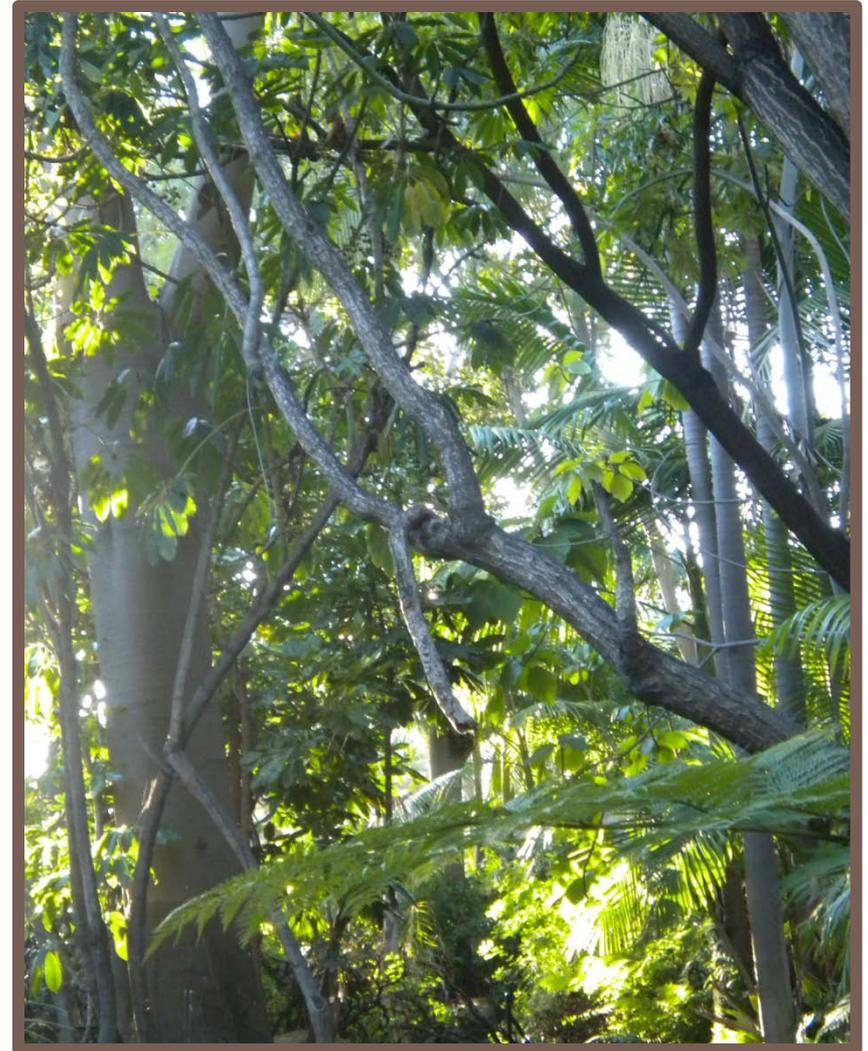
- **Tips:**
 - ▣ Choose your words with care!
 - ▣ Balance anthropomorphism



having great vocabulary didn't save the
THESAURUS
from extinction / eradication / extirpation

Communication: Body Language

- **Tips:**
 - ▣ Professional Appearance
 - ▣ Avoid Distracting Accessories
 - ▣ Have Good Posture
 - ▣ Hand Gestures
 - ▣ Use Eye Contact
 - ▣ SMILE!
 - ▣ Let Your Enthusiasm Show!



Communication: Body Language

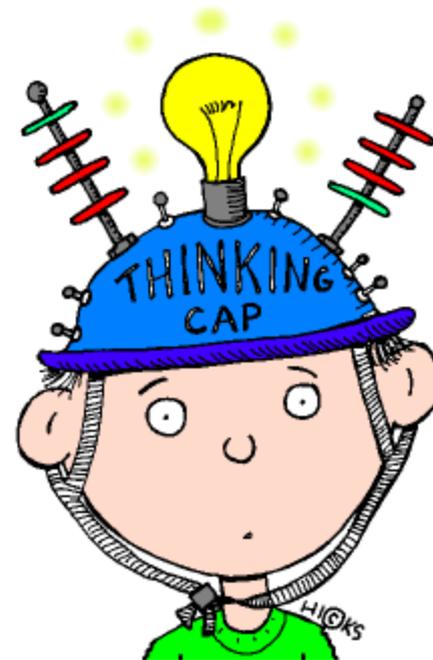
Research indicates that _____% of our messages are communicated through words, _____% through voice, and _____% via body language.



Question & Response Strategies

Asking questions should be a part of every interpretive experience!

Why?



Types of Questions

Closed Ended Questions

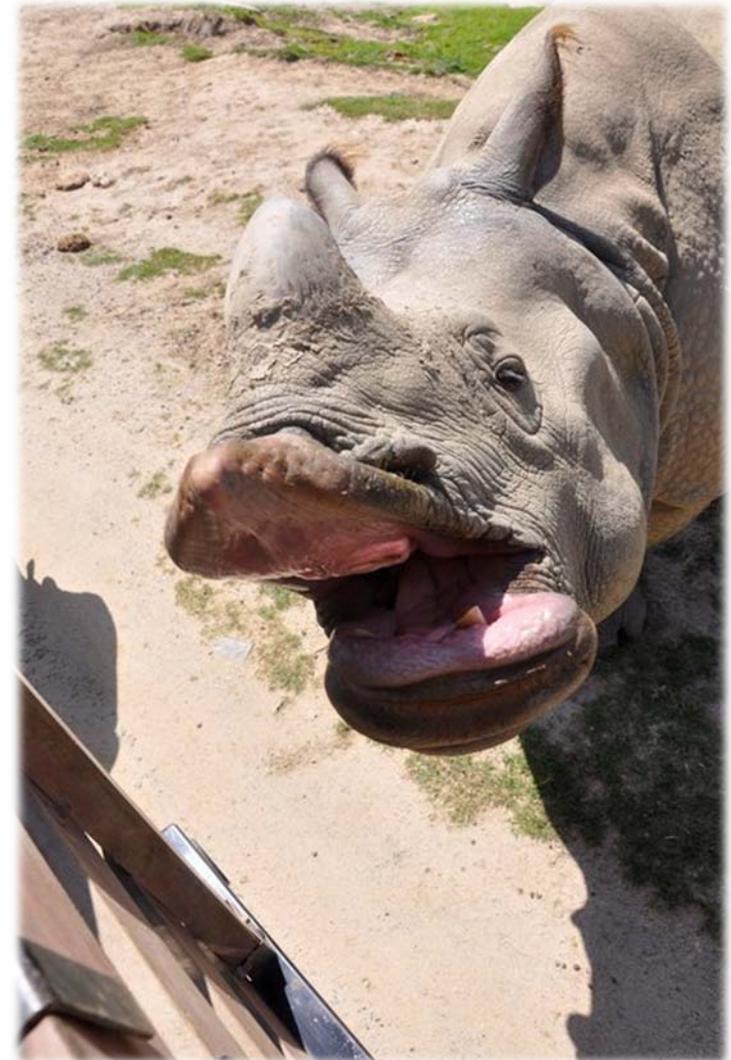
- ❑ Short, direct, factual responses
- ❑ Use to help recall and clarify
- ❑ Good when under time constraints
- ❑ Avoid using obscure questions

Open Ended Questions

- ❑ No wrong answers!
- ❑ Promote thought and creativity
- ❑ Good when time is not an issue (stalling)

Points to Remember When Asking and Responding to Questions

- Give time to respond
- Avoid answering your own questions
- Vary the response strategies



How to Engage Guests

An interpretive program is more enjoyable and a better learning experience when guests are actively engaged.



How to Engage Guests

- **Simplest Level: Encourage guests to look and think.**

“Those sable antelope are all facing different directions so they can keep an eye out for predators from all directions. That’s called an alert circle.”

What could you say instead?

How to Engage Guests

- **Next level:** Pose questions without asking for a reply
- **Most interactive:** Pose questions, ask for response

- Come up with questions that are fun to answer
- Use their bodies!



poeTry

Interpretation is Thematic

Giving Your Presentation a Theme



Interpretation is...

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- A theme provides continuity
- Choose a theme
- Support your theme
- Fall back on your theme
- Re-cap your theme at the end of your presentation

Theme Activity



poetRy

Interpretation is Relevant

Making Your
Interpretation
Personal and
Meaningful



Interpretation is...

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Personal

Meaningful

Techniques for Making Your Interpretation Personal

- Use First Names
- Include Self-Referencing Questions
- Use Universal Concepts



Describe three universal concepts that you could incorporate into your presentation.

Techniques for Making your Interpretation Meaningful

- Connecting
- Good techniques:
 - ▣ Use Examples
 - ▣ Use Comparisons
 - Similes and analogies



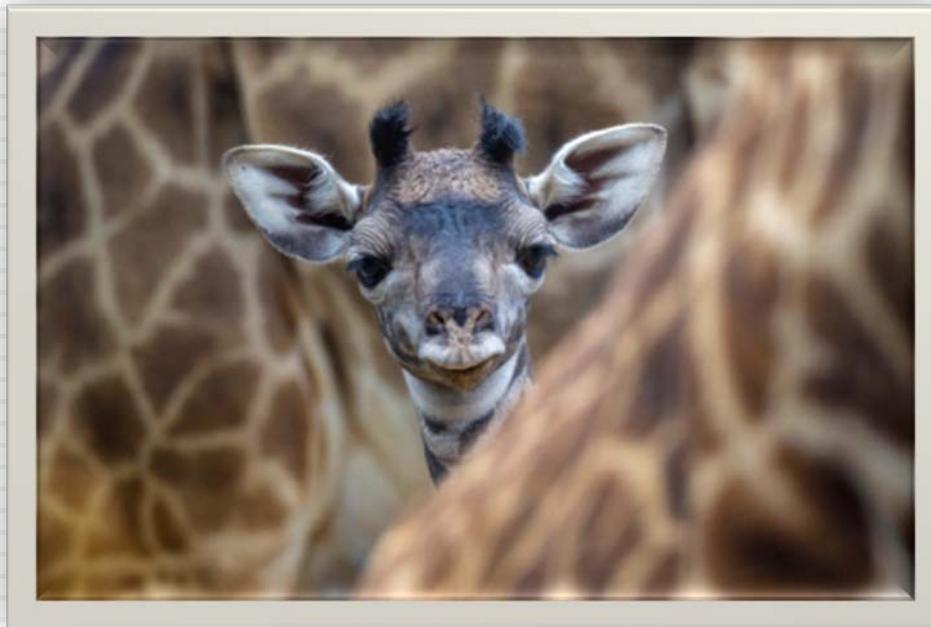
Addressing Challenging Visitor Questions and Issues

- ❑ Don't ignore it.
- ❑ Remain positive, professional, calm, and sincere.
- ❑ Listen and empathize with the visitor (“I can understand why you would feel that way...”)
- ❑ Practice active listening.
- ❑ Can you interpret the situation?
- ❑ Ask for suggestions.
- ❑ Provide assistance or seek additional help.
- ❑ You are representing your organization, not yourself.

poetrY

Interpretation is You!

Be yourself....tell your story as well as the story of the animals, habitats and plants.



Interpretation is a Profession

- National Association for Interpretation
interpnet.com



Professional Expectations

- Characteristics of an interpretation professional:
 - ▣ Delivers only accurate information from approved resources
 - ▣ Has excellent content expertise
 - ▣ Assesses their own interpretive experiences
 - ▣ Encourages and values feedback from others
 - ▣ Uses appropriate humor
 - ▣ Always learning and seeking to improve their skills.
 - ▣ Always looks and acts like a professional
 - ▣ Follows an Interpretive Code of Ethics at all times
 - ▣ Prepares and practices
 - ▣ Is responsible and accountable for their role
 - ▣ Is respectful of others

Interpretation Code of Ethics

- As interpretation professionals, it is critical that we maintain the following ethical principles during any interpretive experience:
 - ▣ Always ensure that information is presented fairly and with complete accuracy.
 - ▣ Research the whole story and present it in a balanced and respectful manner.
 - ▣ Represent your organization's mission.
 - ▣ Present stories and objects ethically.
 - ▣ Show enthusiasm for the facility, the mission, resource, and the visitors.
 - ▣ Always strive to improve your professional skills and knowledge!

Resources

Stay in touch!

Sasha Stallard

760-796-5671

sstallard@sandiegozoo.org

Thank you to Shannon Sandison, Linnae DeCamp, Luis Ochoa and Chris Bradbury from San Diego Zoo Safari Park Africa Tram Station for compiling the information.

Thank you to Kris Whipple and Emily Rothman for providing their expertise and the original information.