

Producing resources for schools

If you can involve local schools in your project, and capture the pupils' imaginations, they may develop an interest in history and heritage that will stay with them for life. Both primary and secondary schools may be interested in learning about your project, and perhaps about becoming involved. Although your approach will need to be adapted for different age groups, it can generate rewards for everyone.

Start by defining your target audience:

- Which school(s) do you want to approach?
- Do you want to involve all years or just one or two?

Why?

- Do you just want to raise general awareness of a place or topic?
- Are there some key points you wish to get across?

How are you going to do this?

- Do you want a teacher to deliver something in school? If so, what do you need to provide?
- Is there an after-school club that might be interested?
- Would you like the children to make a site visit or tour? (You will need to do a risk assessment, and invite the teacher(s) to visit ahead of the appointment.)

Planning activities

- You will need to devise a range of activities, tailored to the age and abilities of the pupils, including things they can touch, and things they can do. (Some of the points

in the previous section on 'Producing displays and exhibitions' may help you to develop material that will appeal to a range of different learning styles.)

- How many people from your group will be needed to deliver this?
- What equipment do you need? Costumes? Technology? Artefacts? Is there anywhere you could borrow these, if you don't already have them?
- You will also need to provide some notes or guidance for the teachers, who may have little knowledge of the topic.
- The pupils are likely to come from a range of different backgrounds, and may cover a wide ability range. Some may never have been to a museum or seen historical artefacts before, and might find it difficult to engage with your material. You will need to find ways to interest them all.
- Because of the way in which history is taught in schools, they may not have a firm grasp of chronology. A timeline can help, moving from prehistory to the present day. This should be illustrated, for example with changing costumes, types of houses or modes of transport.
- For younger children, it can be useful to explain the concept of time, and that you can date things because they change. Relate this to something they can identify with – for example, they could be asked to put pictures of different types of mobile phone in chronological order.
- Help them to appreciate that the pace of change today is much faster – just because something is made of stone, does not mean it's from the stone age, as some older ways of doing things endured for centuries.
- Don't assume they know anything, but don't talk down to them.
- Not everyone will automatically identify with your topic, and older students in particular can erect barriers if they don't feel the material is relevant to them. It can be helpful to explain that the same techniques can be used to investigate other places. If your project is about a specific place, you might want to emphasise that people from all backgrounds have lived there over the centuries, or that people living there have purchased goods produced in other places.

Developing activities

- You will need to develop a range of four or five activities that the pupils can do, and which cover several different parts of the school curriculum.
- If you want to work with several schools, you may wish to create a web resource, so that the schools can download activity sheets.
- For primary school children in particular, at least one of your activities should be tactile – for example, handling items and identifying how they were made and used.

- Relate objects to everyday life – what people did for a living, what their house was like, what everyday life was like for a child in that period.
- If you can also relate it to something that children have already learned at school (e.g. the Romans), then do so, but you can still engage their interest with something new.
- Many people of all ages have been fascinated by the discovery of Richard III, and you may be able to link some of your material to that discovery, or to that period. Suitable exercises might include (1) basic archaeology, such as digging a test pit and carefully recording the finds, (2) how style can help to identify the age of an artefact, using real examples of pottery, (3) using a plastic skeleton to explore what a skeleton can tell us about someone's health and how they died, (4) the types and effectiveness of armour and weapons in 15th century battles, and (5) how people found out that the king was dead (letter writing exercise).
- Don't underestimate how long it will take to prepare your activities.

Approaching a school

- Before approaching a school, think about the key messages you wish to convey, and the activities that will support those. However, unless you have a current schoolteacher in your group, don't spend too much time preparing activities until you know the school is receptive to the idea, and that the activities proposed will meet their needs.
- Don't just email the school secretary – they are likely to receive numerous emails, and it might not get passed on. Identify the school's history coordinator, and make a direct approach to that person. Sell the idea in terms of what the students will gain.
- Recognise that it can take time to build up a relationship with the school before they will agree to become involved. You may find it easier to build a relationship through an existing contact – do any of your group members have children or grandchildren at that school? The school may be more comfortable with an approach from someone they already know.
- Use your own open days or other events to engage with families, and encourage parents to talk to the school about your project and your idea.
- Teachers are busy people, and may be reluctant to introduce new material which they know little about, or which doesn't fit easily into the curriculum. Make it easy for them by providing notes which are informative but not too long, and which emphasise the relevance of the activities. You could offer a free training event for the teachers.
- Does your group have any younger volunteers who would like to be involved? This can be a good way to build their skills as well, perhaps by helping children with activities, or by giving a presentation at a school assembly.

- Maintain contact with the school after the event. Could this be an annual activity?



Pupils of all ages may find pottery identification interesting

Case study: Swithland slate

Target audience: Primary school, years 3 and 4 (ages 8-10)

Delivery: By a teacher in class

Key messages: Properties of different house-building materials, local geology, importance of Swithland slate in Leicestershire since Roman times, how slate is quarried, what uses it has.

Making it relevant: Slate was compared to other roofing and walling materials. The children were encouraged to think about the ease of handling and transport, how raw materials had to be processed, and the properties and suitability of each material.

Object handling: Real slate and concrete roof tiles, thatch and bricks help them to understand weight, durability and how the materials differ.

Activities:

1. The children explored the uses of slate and why it was popular for so many things, from gravestones to billiard tables, roofs to sundials.
2. Younger children made model sundials and used slate pencils to practise cursive writing on paper and on slates.
3. Collages of cottages with slate, thatch or tiled roofs were made using standard art materials and real thatch, emphasising the need to work from the eaves upwards to the ridge, overlapping in order to shed rainwater.
4. The different geological areas within Leicestershire were coloured on maps, and pictures of houses in different parts of the county were matched to local geology.
5. The history of the slate industry was studied using copies of primary sources such as maps, accounts, censuses and directories, to understand the lives of the quarry workers.
6. Transport routes, from Roman roads onwards, were drawn on maps to explain the geographical market for slate, and distances were calculated.
7. The children drew up a set of blasting instructions for quarry employees based on an actual 1804 description of quarrying.
8. They compiled and illustrated a newspaper report on an imaginary quarry disaster.
9. Children designed a slate headstone for a deceased pet.
10. Older and more able children calculated the cost of pieces of slate of varying sizes in pre-decimal currency, based on actual prices in a nineteenth-century account book.



Simple tips for great presentations

Giving presentations is an inevitable part of any project. This guide provides a few simple tips in five key areas, which will ensure your presentation is a success. It concludes with an example of how you can use technology to create a virtual tour for your website.

Planning your presentation

- Make sure you know how much time you will have for your presentation.
- Your audience may have many questions, so make sure you allow ample time for these.
- Write a brief abstract which sums up your presentation in no more than 2-3 sentences. This will help you to focus on the most important points.
- Think about your audience, their background knowledge of your project and what their interests are. If you have been invited to speak to a group you don't know, ask the organiser to tell you something about them and why your topic will be of interest. This information will help you to pitch your presentation at an appropriate level.
- If you want to supply handouts, find out how many people are likely to be there.
- Make sure you know what technology will be available at the venue.

Using images

- A good presentation should be a visual as well as an auditory experience. Carefully selected images will help your audience to understand and remember what you are telling them.
- Photographs you have taken yourself are your own copyright, and you may use them freely.
- Photographs taken by someone else can only be used if the copyright owner has given permission, and you acknowledge them and abide by the terms of that permission.
- You can use photographs from the internet if they have been licensed for use by others under the terms of a Creative Commons licence. There are different types of licence and you need to make sure that the images can be copied in the way that you want to use them. See the Creative Commons website <http://creativecommons.org/> for more details.
- You can search for licensed images on a site such as Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/>), or on Google Images (<http://www.google.co.uk/imghp>). Use the advanced search function to search only within Creative Commons Licensed Content. Ensure you abide by the terms of the licence chosen by the photographer, and that you attribute the image correctly.
- More information about copyright can be found in our 'Final Steps' Guide for Community History and Heritage Groups.

Format of presentation

- Decide the main points you will cover in your presentation.
- Start with a slide that sets out in bullet points the structure and content of your talk. This will give you an opportunity to request and receive feedback about whether that is what the audience is expecting. You can then make adjustments as you go along, if you have

misjudged what they want. The audience will also know the direction your talk will take, which will help them to absorb your material.

- Simple presentations often look the best.
- Have no more than one slide for every minute of your presentation.
- Consider using a template, so all your slides are in the same style.
- Do you need to conform to any corporate image requirements, or use any logos (e.g. your organisation, or your sponsors, funders or donors)?
- Microsoft PowerPoint contains built in templates, which you just open and type in your information. If you use one of these, think about personalising it in some way, as many people will have seen that style used before. There are also many different free templates available online for PowerPoint.
- PowerPoint allows you to make your own template. Use the 'Master Slide' facility (in the 'View' tab), which will apply the style to every slide. This minimises the overall file size. One attractive method is to use a photograph as background, at 95% transparency. If you are doing this, use a plain background for your text boxes, so the words can be read easily without the darkest parts of the photograph intruding.



A personalised template. Note also the Creative Commons licensing box on the image.

- Try to avoid the temptation to use one of the many clever animations within PowerPoint. Some people in the audience will have seen them all before, and may start to get impatient if they have to wait for each slide to emerge through some fancy technology.
- Use a font that is easy to read (not overly cursive), and ideally not less than font size 24.
- Don't type your text in block capitals. People read partly by recognising the shape of words, and that shape is lost if you only use capital letters.

- Don't produce slides with long passages of text, unless they are quotations and essential to your presentation. If you want to use slides which just have words, use bullet points, and restrict yourself to 3-4 points per slide.

Venue and delivery

- Ensure you know where the venue is, and where you can park if you will be driving.
- Consider taking your own laptop (if you have one), especially if you have embedded audio or video into your slides, or are using animations.
- Arrive early, so you have time to try out the technology and ensure it all works.
- Give extra – don't just read what it says on the slide. Explain the pictures and expand on any bullet points.
- Consider using SlideShare to make your slides available to those who could not be present (<http://www.slideshare.net/>)

Reducing technology risks

- Technology doesn't always work, and the software on the computer you will be presenting on may be different from that on the computer you used to create your presentation. Always have a contingency plan.
- If you have been told a computer with PowerPoint will be available and you have created your presentation in any post-2003 version of PowerPoint (file extension .pptx), make sure you also save your file on your memory stick in the pre-2007 format (use the 'save as' command and scroll down to find 'Powerpoint 97-2003 presentation', with the file ending .ppt). Later files ending .pptx will not work on an earlier version of the software.
- Take your presentation on two memory sticks, in case the computer at the venue refuses to accept your first USB stick.
- If you want to show something on the internet, also include screen shots within your slides, so you have something to show people if you can't get a wireless (Wi-Fi) connection. Screen shots can be captured easily using the 'Print Screen' (Prt Scr) key on the top line of your keyboard. Use other software to trim this image before creating your slide (or use the 'Screen clipping' tool in post-2007 versions of Powerpoint, found within the 'insert – screen shot' menu).
- Video and audio clips can bring a presentation to life, but check that the computer at the venue will play sound, and be aware that clips do not always work on a different computer.
- To minimise the possibility of it not working, start by creating a folder on your PC for your presentation. Add the audio and/or video clip to that folder. Create your PowerPoint presentation within the folder, add the clip(s) and save. **Copy the whole folder** to your memory stick and not just the PowerPoint presentation.
- It is possible to buy small plug-in speakers that you can take with you and that don't require a driver to have been installed on the computer.
- Prezi is a free alternative to Powerpoint, and is more sophisticated, but can only be run from the internet. It is therefore a high-risk option for many venues. To see what Prezi can do,

take a look at <http://prezi.com/6ovkw0utnlzj/frog-island-tour-comparison-2002-and-2012/> and see <http://tinyurl.com/puz559k> and the instructions which follow.

- You can also insert sound into a Prezi presentation. This can be used to create a background presentation to run at an open event. See <http://tinyurl.com/n9p63fv>

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