

Tour Guide Training

Module 3: Interpretive Skills

Participant Guide

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Topic 1: What is Interpretation?

1.1 Introduction

Interpretive guiding: is using interpretive activities and presentation techniques when leading or presenting a tour.

An interpretive guide builds bridges between landscapes, people and history, reveals stories behind the scenery, and creates memorable and inspiring experiences! This provides the tourists with memories and stories to tell back home.

Using interpretive techniques makes a tour a much more memorable and interesting experience for tourists.

Subjects for interpretive activities:

• History	• Flora	• Fauna	• Heritage
• Culture	• Art	• Environment	• Industry
• Society	• Future	• Recreation	• Architecture
• Recent events	• Religious festivals	• Sports	• Memorials
• Shopping	• Food & beverages	• Museums	• Tourism
• Customs	• Currency	• Geography	• Agriculture
• Built environment	• Domestic or farm animals	• Seasons	• Religious rituals or observances

Remember:

Whether you are guiding your own group of tourists/clients, or a group from a tour operator, you have to:

1. **Research** the content;
2. **Develop** a good interpretive activity that helps to explain that topic better, or makes it more fun for the tourists to learn about that topic
3. **Practice** the activity and talk that goes with it;
4. **Deliver** the activity and talk; and
5. **Review and revise** the activity after delivering it to see where you can improve

Tour Guide delivers tours for:

Tour Operator/Travel Agent/DMC
e.g. half day city tour, coffee tour, etc.

Self: Own tour:
e.g. evening walking food tour of street food, river life tour, etc.

To Do:
Research and understand what the DMC needs to be delivered

To Do:
Research own content

Develop interpretive activities suitable for the content of the tour
Deliver the interpretive activities: tour commentaries, demonstrations, storytelling, etc.

The next sections will help you to identify the different types of interpretive activities you can include in your tours to make them really interesting, interactive and that tourists will remember.

1.2 Types of Interpretive Activities

Different activities are used in interpretive guiding and you need to think carefully about how you choose them and how you prepare and do them. This section looks at the different interpretive activities that you can use for interesting interpretive guiding experiences.

Interpretive techniques are fun and interesting ways of sharing information with tourists. Interpretive guiding includes the guide giving a talk, using different voice techniques and different items that make the talk more interesting.

The interesting interpretive methods can include a range of the following activities:

Use different voice techniques

Story-telling

Play games

Demonstrations

Sensory awareness exercises

1.2.1 Encouraging people to participate in activities

PICKLES model

Sometimes tourists do not want to try an activity because they may be afraid to:

- look silly in front of other people;
- get sick; or
- get hurt;

You can use the **PICKLES** model to deal with this!

P	Prepare: prepare the tourists for the activity: tell them what is going to happen and what it is about
I	Interaction: talk to them to encourage them to take part in the activity
C	Choice: give them choice – encourage, but don't force!
K	Knowledge: give great, accurate and true information during the activity to reassure them
L	Local: should be an authentic (real) local experience that is exciting and interesting to do
E	Evoke emotion: try to touch the heart and soul with a special activity (feel emotions)
S	Sum up: afterwards, talk about how they felt about the activity, both the guide and the traveller

The following activities can be used on their own, or together with others when delivering interpretive guiding:

1.2.2 Use different voice techniques

Different voice techniques will add interest to the tour and to a commentary. They include:

- **pace:** speak faster or slower;
- **pause/stop** and allow silence/a pause in the commentary;
- **volume:** speak louder/shout or speak more quietly/whisper; and
- **intonation:** make sure you make your voice go up and down and you don't just talk in one tone

1.2.3 Storytelling

Storytelling can be used to:

- make a point;
- tell personal stories or anecdotes; and
- share a myth or legend.

What kinds of stories and where to find them?

A story for telling could be:

- a **folktale** such as a fairy tale, hero tale, funny tale, wisdom tale, animal story, love story, ghost story, myth, or legend;
- a story from a book or movie; and/or
- a real-life story, from history or personal experience.

How to tell a good story....

- get everyone in the party together so that you do not need to shout or tell the story again;
- stand comfortably in a place that everyone can see and hear you;
- look around your audience with a welcoming smile and bright eyes;
- Say where you got your story from: for example, a book, a film, a person, your life, or national culture (folk tales);
- Try to create an atmosphere. Set the scene for your audience. They must be able to see a picture of the story when they close their eyes. Start with the time, place and weather of the story, or 'once upon a time, long long ago, there was...';
- use face expressions to show the feelings of your characters, or the situation they are in, e.g. angry, cold, happy, etc.;
- speak slower and louder than normal, so everyone can hear;
- use different speed and volume of your voice;
- use your hands and body as much as you can, to show shapes of objects, scenery, actions and feelings;
- use different voices for different characters;
- use other sounds for example weather sounds like wind or rain; happening sounds, like explosions or rustling; animal sounds; emotional sounds, like gasps, sighs, crying, yawns. You can ask the audience to help you, by making the sounds;
- leave a space between words or sentences sometimes, to create an atmosphere;
- look around the audience with like you are expecting something to happen. Sometimes surprise them with a loud noise, like a clap of thunder;
- involve your audience if you like, with phrases like "As you know the river is deep and mysterious..." or ask them questions like "What do you think a river monster look like"?

- use variety (different ways). Change the tone, the pitch (highness and lowness of your voice – high like a lady, and low like a man), and the volume of your voice and your speed. Use silences. **Remember, variety catches and holds attention;**
- use gestures, but only ones that help the story. Make them big! Gestures keep the eyes on you;
- in your story, pay special attention to beginnings and endings. Practice an introduction to the story. The introduction can tell something about the story or about you.
- Endings should be clear, so your listeners know that your story’s over without your telling them. You can do this by slowing down and adding emphasis (importance). For example, many story endings use a “slow three”—“happily ever after,” “that’s the end of that,” “and they never saw him again”;
- pay special attention also to how you act out characters. Good characters bring a story to life—so put life into them, with face, voice, gesture, body posture. Try to make each of them different enough so that the audience knows which character is speaking;
- practice and prepare the story – use props if possible;
- avoid verbal rubbish like “um” or “y’know”;
- sit or stand, but face your audience;
- no fidgeting, hands in pockets, or shifting from foot to foot;
- as you tell your story, take your time, and give time to your listeners—time to “see” the story, time to laugh, time to feel, time to think, time to show their interest in what comes next. It’s easy to go too fast, hard to go too slow. If you’re losing their attention, you may need to slow down!
- Pay attention to what works and what doesn’t, so next time you can change, add, or subtract.

1.2.4 Games

Games (which can include playing sport/s) provide opportunity a chance for tour members to:

- have fun;
- learn something; and/ or
- try something new.

Usually games should be from the Lao culture.

They must not be dangerous or create any physical risk to the tourists.

Examples:

- card games;
- memory games;
- children’s games;
- physical skill games – flipping stones, clapping; or
- sports: e.g. petanque

What to do:

1. find a game that suits the group, the tour topic and the time and space available.
Remember to check things like if the tourist is fit enough, if the game is an active game;
2. collect any materials you need for the game;
3. explain the rules of the game; and
4. play the game.

When and where: depending on the type of game:

- at the beginning of a tour, in order to create group bonding (amongst people who do not know each other);
- while travelling from place to place;
- after dinner; or
- at a suitable place for an outdoor game such as boules

1.2.5 Demonstrations

These are popular interpretive activities. They may be:

- **passive:** where a skill is shown to the group, and the group only watches; or
- **active:** where the tour group practices the skills as well such as in a cooking class where they will actually cook.

Examples of demonstrations:

- handicrafts;
- cooking; or
- using equipment for example during adventure tourism.

Prepare for a demonstration:

- make sure you know what has to be shown and how to do it;
- collect all the materials or equipment you need; and
- practice!

How to do it:

- put all the materials and equipment you need out so it is ready to use;
- make sure everyone can see;
- show each step of the process you are showing them;
- explain each step loudly and clearly; and
- give extra interesting information such as something about the method you are using, the equipment, the ingredients, etc., to make it interesting.

1.2.6 Sensory awareness exercises

These are exercises where people are able to (for example):

- **smell:** an interesting or nice smell, such as coffee, incense, flowers, durian, etc.;
- **taste:** food and drinks;
- **touch:** feel textures, temperatures and weights;
- **sight:** colours, patterns, views; and/ or
- **hearing:** sounds – wind, birds, water, chanting, bells, music, etc.

Where to use:

- look for chances to involve the senses; and/ or
- use these in other interpretive activities such as when showing something (like coffee making) or even storytelling.

How to do:

1. See if one or more senses can be used in an interpretive guiding activity: think about where you will be, what you will be doing, the environment or place in which this takes place, and if there are chances to listen, hear, taste, touch, smell, or feel.
2. Decide how you will use this opportunity: for example:
 - suggest that tourists listen to the sounds of nature: birds, waterfall, echoes;
 - feel the textures of different weaves of silk;
 - taste the coffee/fruit/herbs/etc.; or
 - smell freshly roasted coffee beans, durian fruit (!!), flowers, herbs or spices.
3. Decide on and put out any materials you may need, e.g. a knife to cut fruit, cups for coffee, etc.;
4. Deliver the senses activity and help the tourists with what to look for or expect – **for example**, compare the feel of different types of silk, one is smoother or thinner than the other; the tamarind pod – feel it and smell it – ask what does it smell like? Ask, does it remind you of the smell of anything else; tamarind is sweet and sour, etc.; and
5. Give them time to enjoy the activity fully with their senses.

1.3 Props and Resources

Use props and resources to make the interpretive activity more interesting, involve the tour members and even more safe or have some fun. Props and resources can include, for example:

- **Artefacts:** musical instruments, items of clothing, items of worship, etc.;
- **raw materials:** ingredients, items used to make the article e.g. wood for handicrafts;
- **tools, equipment or utensils:** items used in the making of an article or item; and/ or
- **Finished products:** examples of completed items

How to use them:

1. Check if there are any props, resources or materials that can add more value to an interpretive activity;
2. collect, arrange, borrow or buy the necessary items;
3. pack them to take with you or to get at the venue of the interpretive activity;
4. get them ready and close to you before you start the activity;
5. use them during the activity; and
6. clean, throw away or pack them up after the activity.

Prepare any on-tour documents/information for use and/or distribution on-tour – these may be different depending on the type of activity but could include:

- safety tips;
- rules of the game;
- prepared talk;
- tourist checklists;
- maps; or
- Pictures.
- Activity-related physical resources – which may include:
 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – safety equipment;
 - sports gear;
 - props – items that can help you explain the activity;
 - costumes – something interesting to wear in an activity – e.g. hat or robe; and/ or
 - equipment and items specific to each individual activity.
- Human resources (people)– such as:
 - performers and actors;
 - presenters and demonstrators; and/ or
 - guest speakers or specialist guides
- Equipment needed to present, explain and/or do the activity – which can include microphones and speakers.

Topic 2: Get Organised

You will deliver tours on different topics, to different groups, and in different places. You have to know all these tours well, and keep updating yourself on the content and organisation of the tour before you present it.

It is a good idea to get organised. You should keep the information about the tours and interpretive activities that you deliver in a way that you can easily use it and update it based on your experiences every time you deliver it. Some basic stationery is useful.

2.1 Activity file

This is a simple ring file with dividers. Each divider will contain information on a different interpretive activity including:

1. preparation notes (hand written or typed)
2. instructions on how to deliver the activity: timing, props or resources, etc.;
3. list of resources (items or people) needed; and/ or
4. supporting information about the activity or attraction – brochure, magazine articles, information downloaded off the Internet, etc.

Managing the file:

clear out and update the file regularly:

1. throw old or damaged information away and replace with new material; and
2. rewrite or reprint the information neatly if notes have been changed.

Using the file:

the file is used for the following three activities:

1. **before: activity planning:** make up a new activity – all the notes, ideas, content, resources, etc. that will be needed for and used to do the activity;
2. **during: activity preparation:** before a tour/interpretive activity – go through the notes for that activity; and
3. **after: activity review and revision:** after the activity – look at the notes after the activity – update or change the activity based on what you learned or did during the activity that is different from your notes or plan.

Topic 3: Planning and Developing an Interpretive Activity

You need to choose the ‘right’ type of activity for a specific situation, group or tour. Keep in mind that:

- there are many different types of interpretive activities;
- a good tour should include a mix of different activities; and
- different tours and themes are suited to different activities.

A few things will influence the interpretive activities you choose. Usually a few of these will work together to help you make your decision. The things to think about when choosing what type of activity to develop include:

Overall tour theme:

- **the subject/topic** for the tour, or the name/title given to the tour (e.g. culture tour, adventure tour, etc.);
- **the bigger picture:** other interpretive activities and tour experiences that are included on the tour; and/ or
- **promises** that were made in the advertisements and brochures for the tour e.g. ‘taste local special food’.

Current activity or topic:

- some activities will be good for specific content – they will ‘match’ each other!
 - For example: you will not use ‘storytelling’ to show how to use safety equipment on an adventure trek – you would use a demonstration (show them).
 - So check the type of content, and choose the most suitable type of activity to match the content.

The amount of time the guide will spend with the group. Sometimes you may only spend a day with tourists (e.g. Pakse city tour)

The audience: who is the activity for? Consider the following:

- **feedback received from past tour group members – for example:**
 - What they enjoyed/wanted to continue/wanted more of?
 - What they wanted but which was not included in the tour?
 - What they **did not enjoy/wanted to stop/wanted less of?**
- Be appropriate for individual audiences: what is their profile and interests?
- Involve **the tour group members – mentally** (mind) **and/or physically** (body)

General things to keep in mind

- **What you need to develop and present the activity such as:**

- time needed for the activity;
- skill – can you do the activity yourself, or does someone need to help you or do it for you? For example – can you tell a story really well, or should someone else tell the story? Can you make the food or the coffee?
- items you need for the activity such as sports equipment, safety gear, food and drinks, artefacts, etc.;
- budget (money allowed to be spent) available for the activity.
- **Having to work within the rules, such as:**
 - internal policies and procedures of the Tour Operator;
 - laws from government; and/or
 - agreements with the host community in which the tour is being conducted.

Be environmentally sensitive and sustainable

- **Get background on the activity – about:**
 - the places where you will do the activity – how do you get there, is there electricity if you need it, water, etc.?
 - cultural and heritage things that might impact the activity; e.g. specific dress needs like having to wear proper clothes when entering a temple, etc.

3.1 Plan the activity

Decide on the type of interpretive activity to deliver and plan it carefully. There are lots of things to think about when planning an activity. These can all be written down so that you can see, develop and change it as you go along.

- **Type/name of activity**
- **Resources** required
- **Time** required – for:
 - preparation – obtaining resources, printing materials and practicing; and
 - doing the activity in an actual tour situation
- **Target audience/s** by type/description – some activities may (for example) be suitable for children but not older people; others may be suitable for people who can walk but not those in wheel chairs.
- **Audience numbers:**
 - minimum (fewest) people/ tourists required to make the activity work well; and
 - maximum (most) people/tourists – considering resources available, time, cost and ability for the activity to take place.

Detailed description of activity:

- the different steps in the activity;
- timing;

- how you will introduce the activity;
- important things you need to say or tell;
- things that should not be shared with the tourists;
- who else will be involved
- what the tour group members will have to do – their involvement;
- what the main part of the activity is; and
- how you will end the activity – the conclusion and discussion afterwards.

3.1.1 Activity planning template

It is easiest to use an Activity Planning Sheet to write down all these items above. When you plan a tour, the following form can help you to organise your thoughts and information:

File into your activity File

Once you have planned (and tested and revised) the activity, file the planning page into your activity file, with any other supporting information such as:

- **Site information:** e.g. maps, brochures, entry fees, contact numbers, etc.
- **Paper resources:** info downloaded off the Internet, any hand-outs for participants
- **Other:** research notes, contact details for experts on the subject, references to other books, websites or articles on the subject, indemnity forms, etc.

Tour/Interpretive Activity Planning Sheet	
Activity name:	(what is the activity?)
Activity Type:	e.g. demonstration, sensory activity, etc..
Preparation	
1. Group profile:	who is this activity for? Describe them: age, nationality, likes, dislikes
2. How many people can I take on this activity?	(minimum and maximum)
3. How long with this activity take?	Timing
4. What time of day will I run this activity?	E.g. early morning market tour, evening food tour, etc.
5. What things will I need to run this activity?	The equipment, resources, ingredients, props, etc. I will need – list these:
6. What do you want to achieve with this activity?	Objectives:
7. What transport will you need?	
8. What must I do to prepare the tourists/participants?	E.g. give them choice to participate: explain any dangers or risks; invite them to join or not.
9. What must tourists/participants bring to the activity?	E.g. sunblock, hat, water, closed shoes, etc.

Knowledge and Research

10. What research and information do I need to deliver this activity very well?
(E.g. background, history, processes, ingredients, etc.) This will help you give them information and answer questions

Interaction

11. What will I say and what will I do: what is my script?

11.1 Welcome and introduction:

11.2 Open the activity: background and what the activity is about

11.3 Main activity (content): what are the steps and key points: and what will I say and do in each step? What of the knowledge will I share? What props and resources will I need for each step?

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

11.4 Ending of the activity: talk about the activity and thank participants

Special Notes:

- Payment by tour members: included or not included in tour price?

- **Risks:**
- **How can I manage the risks:**

Example of a completed Activity Planning Sheet:

Interpretive Activity Planning Sheet	
Activity name:	Tamarind Talk and Tasting
Activity Type:	Demonstration and Sensory Activity
Preparation	
1. Group profile:	general tourists, any nationality and age
2. How many people can I take on this activity?	2 - 10
3. How long with this activity take?	30 minutes
4. What time of day can I run this activity?	Anytime during the day
5. What things will I need to run this activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh tamarind pods • Tamarind jam • Tamarind juice • Tamarind sweets • Plates and bowls for each item to taste • Plates for tamarind shells and seeds • Clean wet cloth for wiping hands • Other:
6. What do you want to achieve with this activity?	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and experience of tasking a local fruit and the products made from the fruit • Explain the use of the fruit as an important cooking ingredient to give a sour taste to foods • Engage with tourists in an interesting activity and using all the senses
7. What transport will we need?	None
8. What must I do to prepare the participants?	

No special preparation

9. What must tourists/participants bring to the activity? Nothing specific needed to bring

Knowledge and Research

10. What research and information do I need to deliver this activity well?

- Tamarind facts
- Information about the tree and fruit
- Tamarind products

Interaction

11. What will I say and what will I do:

11.1 Welcome and introduction:

Welcome members to the activity and thank them for coming

11.2 Open the activity:

In this activity we will learn about tamarind, taste tamarind by itself, and taste a variety of tamarind products

11.3 Main Activity (content):

Step 1: All about tamarind: Talk about Tamarind

- **History and general information:**
 - Originally from Africa, it grows in subtropical conditions.
 - Brought to Asia thousands of years ago by traders.
 - They grow throughout tropical and subtropical regions of Africa, South Asia, South America and Caribbean islands.
 - India is the biggest grower and user of tamarind, followed by USA as next biggest grower (southern states – Florida)
 - Thailand has the largest plantations of the ASEAN nations, followed by Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines
- **The tree:**
 - Big, bushy tree with dense, small, green leaves. Up to 80ft (about 24 metres)
 - The little leaves close at night!
 - A mature tree may be capable of producing up to 175 kg (350 lb) of fruit per year
 - Has small, long red and yellow flowers
- **The fruit:**
 - Is similar to a pea or a bean – grows in a pod (a legume)
 - The fruit has a fleshy, juicy, acidic pulp.
 - It is mature when the flesh is coloured brown or reddish-brown.
 - The tamarinds of Asia have longer pods containing 6 to 12 seeds, whereas African and West Indian varieties have short pods containing 1 to 6 seeds.

- The seeds are flattish, and glossy brown.
- **What it contains:** tartaric acid, sugar, B vitamins and calcium.
- **Processed tamarind:** compressed tamarind blocks, ready-to-use slices, paste, concentrates, balls, etc. can be found in condiment stores and spice markets.
- **Quality:** choose fresh unbroken pods, not old, dried pulp or pods.
- **Storage:** once at home store the pods or pulp inside the refrigerator where it will stay fresh for several months.

Step 2: Demonstrate how to open the fruit

- Give all participants a tamarind pod
- Hold a pod so that they can all see what you do
- Open the pod – showing and telling them how
- See if they are all following and copying
- Show how to take the flesh with the pip out of the pod

Step 3: Tasting

- Taste the tamarind: Discuss the taste: taste is ‘sweet and sour’
- **Important:** tell them not to swallow the seeds – they can spit seeds into the plates provided
- Taste the other tamarind products and discuss each one:
 - Jam
 - Juice (in small cups)
 - Sweets

Step 4: Uses of tamarind:

- **Tamarind as a cooking ingredient**
 - Tamarind is a common ingredient all over India and South-East Asia in curries, “rasam”, chutneys, as well as in vegetable and lentil recipes.
 - **Sweet dishes:** desserts, jam, blended into juices or sweetened drinks, sorbets, ice creams and other snacks
 - **Savoury dishes:** flavour for soups (sour soups)
 - The pulp is also favoured in “hot and sour” soups as well in marinades.
 - The juice made of tamarind pulp with addition of dates, sugar, honey, cardamom, cloves, and coriander seeds are a refreshing drink marketed in different parts of the world.
 - **Ask** (especially British people) did they know – tamarind is used in **Worcestershire sauce (Wooster sauce)**
- **Other uses of tamarind**
 - Throughout Southeast Asia, fruit of the tamarind is used as a poultice applied to foreheads of fever sufferers
 - Used as a laxative – to make your stomach work!

- In homes and temples, especially in Buddhist Asian countries, the fruit pulp is used to polish brass shrine statues and lamps, and copper, brass, and bronze utensils
- Tamarind wood is a bold red colour. It is very dense and strong, so is used in making furniture and wooden flooring

Step 5: Game

- Show participants how to play the game with the tamarind seeds – shooting them into the goal!
- Give them time to practice and maybe give a small tamarind prize (e.g. some candy) to the winner.

11.4 Ending of the activity:

- Ask if any questions
- Thank participants for attending, and tell them I hope that they will appreciate tamarind from now on.

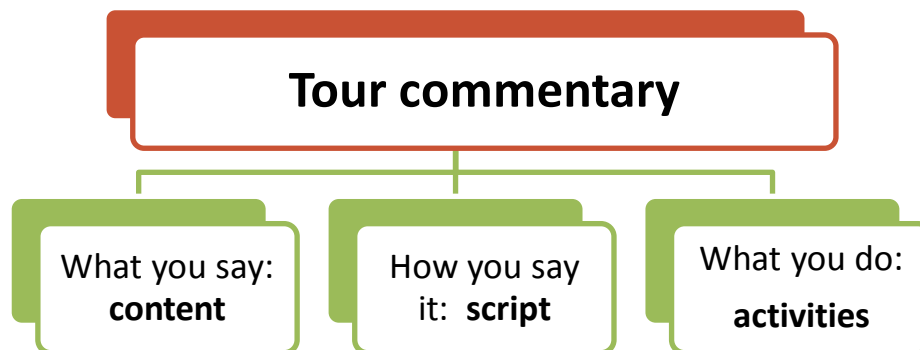
Special Notes:

- Payment by tour members: included in tour price
- **Risks:** swallowing seed/pip and choking
- **How can I manage the risks: warn participants NOT to swallow the pip!**

Reference sources:

<http://www.tamarindfruit.com/how.php?MENU=3>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamarind>
<http://www.nutrition-and-you.com/tamarind.html>

3.2 Writing Tour Content: Commentaries and Interpretive Activities



3.2.1 Research

A common mistake made by many Tour Guides is that they think they already know the information that needs to be provided as part of a tour talk.

Tour guides often trust their local, general knowledge thinking that it will give them enough information for tourists. But remember, you need to give:

- information on more topics than most people know about;
- more detail than most people have in their general knowledge; and
- updated/the latest information to make it current.

Remember:

You need to have more and better information than you can simply get from Google or Wikipedia: most tourists use these all the time, and so they will probably already have gotten the same information from these sources. You need to tell them more information, different information or things that are really interesting or only local people will know.



The information must be **MORE INTERESTING** and **BETTER PRESENTED** than a tourist can simply find on the internet.

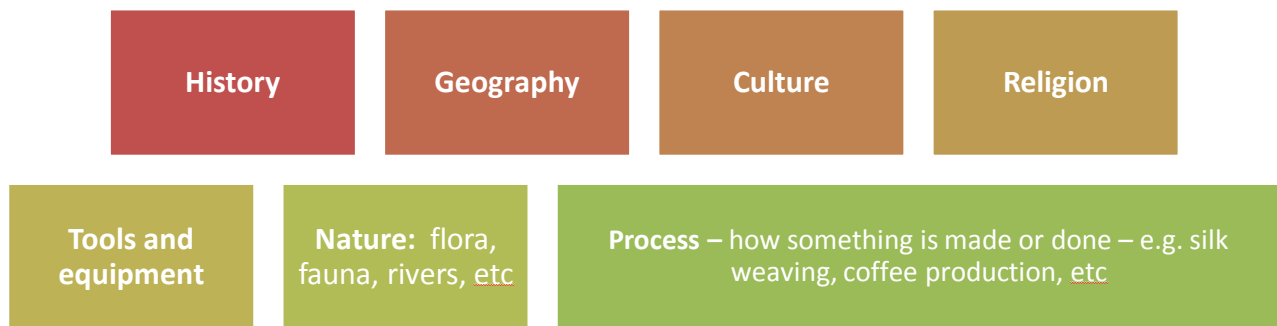
Need for research

Tour Guides need to keep updated on the information they need to share. Guides must therefore:

- **research** the topics you need to know about;
- use a mix of research sources to improve (have better) knowledge – don't just use one source; and
- take notes – while doing research to keep:

- facts and details – for you to read later when writing the script for the commentary; and
- details of the sources (where did you get the information) used to get this information – so these sources can be looked at again in the future to update information.

You have to research the content of your activity. Your research could be about any of some of the following, or more:



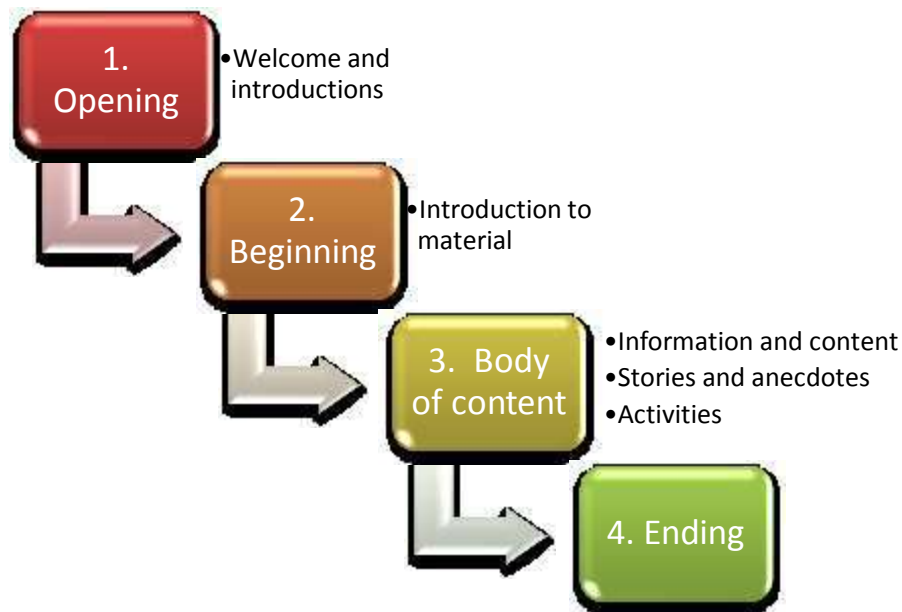
Who can help? There are many people who can help provide input and ideas to interpretive activities, for example:

Subject Matter Experts	Cultural Advisers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts on content for e.g. history, geography, nature, architecture, farming, manufacturing, etc. • Skills: give demonstrations of a variety of skills and techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and culture • Religion • Education • Medicine • Care for others – children, elderly, sick • Food and drink • Homes, shelter, housing and living arrangements • Customs, rites and traditions • Costumes and dress

3.2.2 Develop the content for an activity

- Arrange the information in **logical order**:
 - have a formal structure – this means include (for each activity):
 1. an **introduction** – to the activity, site, topic or whatever is being talked about;
 2. a **body** – the main content; and
 3. a **conclusion** – summary (shortly say) of what has been presented

- Match information to tour locations, destinations, attractions, activities and inclusions



- **Prepare enough information:**
 - cover the **depth and breadth** (all) of information: balance the content that it is not:
 - too little: That it does not cover the most important points properly; or
 - too much that it gets boring for most tourists.
 - check that there is enough time when on-tour to deliver this information – in terms of (for example) being able to stop at a location when talking, or being able to deliver the information on the tour vehicle before the destination/attraction has been reached.

Remember when you write content:

- make sure that language (the words) used does not give unintended (not on purpose) offence to:
 - gender;
 - culture;
 - race;
 - age; and/ or
 - personal characteristics: size, shape, nationality, etc..
- **home country** – where do your tourists come from? The commentary needs to:
 - give comparisons of the home country of tour group members to Laos – for example:
 - if Laos uses metric measurements and the tour group country uses imperial, then you must tell them measurements in imperial not just metric (for example, a tree is 80 feet/24 metres, high) Remember to look these up when you are planning

your activity and write them into your activity content; (Tip – use your converter App for this!)

- conversions need to be made of references to currency – so prices in Laos are given in the currency of the home country for the tour group members;
- use, words, phrases and sayings that the people from the country of origin will understand – for example say ‘jelly’ instead of ‘jam’ for Americans.

3.2.3 Develop a Script

What is a **script**?

The written words of a speech or a talk

Use these 5 steps to prepare and present your tour commentary:

1. prepare a script – write down what you are going to say;
2. practice the script;
3. make changes based on what you learned in the practice of the script;
4. practice the changed script; (keep doing this until you are happy!)
5. present the activity to real live tourists!

Tips and techniques for writing scripts

Tour scripts **cannot** be written on-the-day: You need time to research, develop, practice and revise before they are ready for using on real tourists.

When writing content for tour activities and scripts, remember:

- make sure the content is **true and up to date**:
 - separate opinion from facts;
 - no made up facts!
 - double check your facts from different sources.
- include important information – as relevant to:
 - the time of day (e.g. after dark **safety and security**);
 - road/route conditions (e.g. steep, slippery, wet);
 - expected weather (wet weather cautions); and/ or
 - activities and inclusions while on-tour.

3.2.4 Test Your Activity

Write out the important points of the script for your activity onto a few cards or smaller pieces of paper stapled together. This will make it easy for you to check what you have to say without having big sheets of paper in your hands.

Once you have drafted the activity you need to practice it in a touring situation to test:

- what works?
- what does not work?
- it is too long or too short?
- are the resources right? Enough? The right ones? Available? Etc.
- do inputs from other people work? (Other members contributing to the tour activity such as vendors, suppliers, etc.)

Good and useful ways to test your scripts are:

- **speak aloud** and deliver the whole talk to get a real feeling of how it sounds and what works
 - just reading it to yourself is not the same as saying it out aloud.
- **practice your** actual tour delivering the script, aloud, with the proposed:
 - route;
 - destinations, attractions, activities and inclusions;
 - timing; and/ or
 - other things you have to consider, like transport.

In other words visit the site, walk the walk, talk the talk. This is needed to get an idea of whether the commentary fits with the time available for the tour. Keep a record of the practice to check the timing and how the commentary links with the points of interest, stops/breaks, destinations, attractions, activities and other inclusions.

- practice your activity/tour to colleagues, especially experienced Tour Guides for their feedback and comment.
- include props, anecdotes and other activities as, when and where planned.
- ask colleagues and/or family and friends to play the role of tour group members during the practice sessions – so they can give you honest feedback on your performance which will help you make the final product much better!

3.2.5 Improve your activity

After you have tested your activity, you need to make changes to improve it. Remember:

- **all** draft activities will need to be changed to make them better – there will always be things that don't work the way you thought they would;
- make the changes needed – don't ignore things that did not work!
- ask for feedback and inputs, and use these to improve your activity; and
- you may have to make a number of revisions (changes)– it will just get better and better!

How to change the talk or activity:

When making changes, you could:

<p>Add material such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More examples ▪ Extra details ▪ Extra information ▪ Extra references ▪ Better illustrations ▪ More anecdotes ▪ Other topics not initially covered 	<p>Delete or update content – that may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not relevant ▪ Not true ▪ Out of date ▪ Not appropriate ▪ Too long
<p>Fix any technical aspects of the activity – such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structure ▪ The order of the information ▪ Timing 	
<p>Run another trial of the revised draft scripted commentary – and repeat the ‘draft-trial-revise’ process again until you are happy with the final result.</p>	

Risk Management

Remember your responsibility to your tourists during any interpretive activity!

Duty of Care

All businesses and employees have a Duty of Care to:

- create and keep a touring environment that does not cause a risk to people (staff, members of the public, tourists); and
- do something to avoid causing possible harm/risk to people/customers/tour group members or their property/belongings.

Double check all your planning and preparations to make sure you have found/seen any risks and have a plan to deal with them!

Topic 4: Deliver an Interpretive Activity

4.1 Delivery tips

Simple tips for delivering a really good tour, activity or commentary include:

- choose a good time for delivery (e.g. not while people seem tired or want to rest);
- stand where everyone can see you and away from any other groups in the area;
- face the group in the best way possible;
- speak loud enough for everyone to hear – or use technology to help project your voice;
- stay interested and be helpful during the whole tour and in a way that will be useful to the type of tour group members – while most tours are meant to be ‘fun’ there are some where themes should be reserved, respectful and sombre (quieter);
- **focus your attention on the whole group** – talk to and include all the tour group members:

Problems to be careful of:

- talking only to people who are closest to you;
- talking only to people you can see easily;
- commentating only to one or two ‘special’ group members; and/ or
- focussing on a certain person, age group, nationality or gender.

- **talk in a way that most of the tourists** will understand. Keeping in mind their age, country, education, language, culture and special needs – this means:
 - use the right words, terms and phrases; and
 - emphasise points that you know are specifically interesting to the group – e.g. with an American group, include the fact that the USA is the 2nd largest producer of tamarind in the world when giving a tamarind talk.
- **get feedback** from the group throughout the commentary:
 - can they hear/see?
 - anything else they want to know?
 - do they want a break/rest?
- **check for understanding** of what has been said – for example:
 - ask “Did everyone/you understand?”
 - be aware of body language that will show you that the tourists didn’t understand or were confused;
 - listen for comments from tourists “What did he say?”
- **encourage questions** – and answer them in a way which shows you like them asking questions;
- **make the commentary a ‘unique’ (one-of-a-kind) event** – don’t let commentaries:
 - become boring and lifeless; or
 - sound like you are bored because you have said the same thing so many times.
- **use the script that you wrote:**

- all the information in the script needs to be said but you might want to add to it at times and
- no content should be left out in the talk you give.
- **add other comments to the talk** – which may relate to:
 - new information which you have just found out
 - special details about the interests of the group e.g. with an American group, mention the fact that the USA is the 2nd largest producer of tamarind in the world when giving a tamarind talk.
- **know when to be quiet** – many people who deliver tours seem to think their job is to talk all the time and this is not true. It is important to keep quiet at times to allow tourists to:
 - have a break from the commentary; and/ or
 - experience the tour in peace and quiet.

Conduct the activity

For a hands-on activity for the group, remember:

- tell people how long the activity is going to be;
- tell them all safety information – explain any rules which are important;
- hand out safety gear, clothes and equipment: demonstrate (show) how to use it and help tourists to wear/become comfortable with it;
- hand out and explain how to use equipment, props, and tools if needed;
- do a demonstration – show people how to do the activity – give them tips about how to do it;
- be ready to stop the activity if you think/see someone is in danger or something dangerous has happened;
- check if the tourists can do it – some tour group members will not be able to do some activities because of health or age reasons;
- be tactful (polite) when telling someone they cannot join in an activity and try to have a substitute (some other activity) available;
- Keep the group small if there is a limit to the number of tour group members who can do it at any one time;
- encourage people as they participate – “that’s great!”, ‘nice work’, “well done”, etc.;
- keep track of time – don’t let the activity run over the scheduled time; and
- congratulate (give good feedback) tourists – and share their excitement and experiences.

A good example here is a **safety briefing (meeting/discussion)** at the beginning of a boat cruise down the Mekong – show clients life jackets and how to use them, etc.

4.2 Personal style and showmanship

Tour Guides with personality and energy are the most successful, so work a style that will make your tourists remember you!

Remember that your style must not distract people from what you are saying or doing.

When you develop your own, style think about:

- **speech** – how you say things, how fast or slow you speak, how loud or soft you speak; and
- **type of interaction** with people – this means:
 - how formal or informal you are;
 - what you call people – by their first names, or Mr/Ms;
 - how much you involve your tour members; and
 - how warm and open, or formal and distant you are with people.

4.3 Microphone techniques

The following tips will help when working with a microphone:

-
- **read the instructions on how to use the microphone equipment!**

- **testing:**
 - check and test the equipment and systems (a ‘sound check’) before the tour starts – and before the tourists arrive to make sure:
 - everything works properly; and
 - all settings are correct.
 - do not blow into it or tap it when you start talking – this is unprofessional and annoying to tour group members.
 - In a bus, ask the driver to check the bass levels and then test that the sound is clear – before the tour starts.

- **Handling:**
 - hold the microphone firmly – if the hand keeps moving on the microphone, this sound may also be heard;
 - do not wave it around as your voice will be louder and softer, depending on how close the microphone is to your mouth at a time;
 - set and keep an even distance between the mouth and the microphone – based on what the instruction booklet says;
 - turn it off when you are not using it; and
 - protect the microphone from wind if you are using it outside;

- **speaking**
 - speak clearly; and
 - say words properly.

- **avoid feedback (echo)** –follow basic rules like:
-

- do not hold the microphone too close to a speaker; and
- do not point a microphone towards a speaker.
-
- **volume:**
 - speak at the same volume you usually speak;
 - do not shout into the microphone;
 - turn up the volume when:
 - there is extra noise;
 - the group is big; and/ or
 - people say they are having trouble hearing.
 -
- **delivery tips**
 - use a lot of pointing and hand gestures – to show what is commented on, where things are and where people need to look to see what is being talked about; and
 - interact with the group – ask them questions; get their feedback.

4.4 Answer questions

How to answer questions

Give a direct answer to the question which was asked – this means:

- give a full, detailed, and honest answer;
- do not avoid questions or ignore them;
- be prepared to say “I’m sorry but I don’t know the answer to that question.” See next section for more on this; and
- never make up an answer.

Make sure that if you give your personal opinion in an answer that you say that this is your opinion and not a fact.

Follow-up on unanswered questions

No Tour Guide can ever know everything!

There will **always** be times when a Tour Guide gets a question they cannot answer.

- Don’t get upset – it happens to all guides!
- Have a plan on how to handle questions you don’t have answers for.

Deal with questions which cannot be answered

Some tips to handle these questions:

- apologise that you don’t know – “I’m sorry, I really don’t know the answer to that”;

- the apology needs to be honest and you need to show the right body language/facial expressions to show it's real.
- ask the question to the rest of the group to see if anyone in the tour group knows the answer to the question: "Does anyone know....?"
- tell tourists where they could look for the answer:
 - brochures, posters, hand-outs which are available when you get off the vehicle;
 - a website; or
 - a Visitor Information Centre.
- write down the question so you don't forget to look it up; and
- plan and then research the question and:
 - give the answer as soon as you can to the person who asked the question

Topic 5: Review and Revise your activity

What is a 'critique'?

Constructive (not destructive) evaluation – useful, not hurtful comment/feedback.

5.1 Review

You need to review (examine) your interpretive activities to see how well they went and what you can improve (make better) the next time you do it.

After the activity, at the end of the day/tour, open your file, take out your planning notes and script, and think:

- how did the activity go?
- was the speed/pace right? Was it too fast? Was it too slow?
- did I have enough time to say what I wanted to say?
- did I run out of things to say too quickly?
- did I have too much to say in the time I had?
- did I give the right type of information? Do I always get the same questions from tour members? If so, then add that content into the activity
- take some content out? Say less? Take less time on the group interaction, etc.
- can it be better? How should I adjust it?
- are all the activities of the right quality, are they relevant and interesting enough?
- were the tour members happy with the activity/tour?
- did I come out with the right cost? (for own tours)
- were there any risks I did not expect?
- any problems that I have to plan for next time?

When to review?

Just after the activity — when you can still remember well.

Anyone to help or ask?

Ask for feedback from other people involved in the activity or tour, like:

- driver;
- suppliers: vendors (e.g. restaurants), site staff at attractions, etc.; and/ or
- participants – tourists.

5.2 Revise

Look at the inputs, feedback and your own critique (own judgement) and make the changes you need IMMEDIATELY (before you forget and get busy with something else!).

Make the changes to your notes and your activity plan. If you can, do them on a computer and print a new copy with the changes on it, and file this in your file for next time.

Add in any new materials, brochures, price lists, etc. that may be useful next time.

Tour/Interpretive Activity Planning Sheet	
Activity name:	(what is the activity?)
Activity Type:	e.g. demonstration, sensory activity, etc.
Preparation	
1. Group profile:	who is this activity for? Describe them: age, nationality, likes, dislikes
2. How many people can I take on this activity?	(minimum and maximum)
3. How long with this activity take?	Time
4. What time of day can I run this activity?	E.g. early morning market tour, evening food tour, etc.
5. What things will I need to run this activity?	The equipment, resources, ingredients, props, etc. you will need – list these:
6. What do I want to achieve with this activity?	Objectives:
7. What transport will I need?	
8. What must I do to prepare the tourists/ participants?	E.g. give them choice to participate: explain any dangers or risks; invite them to join or not.
9. What must tourists/participants bring to the activity?	E.g. sunblock, hat,

water, closed shoes, etc.

Knowledge and Research

10. What research and information do you need to deliver this activity well?
(E.g. background, history, processes, ingredients, etc.) This will help you give commentary and answer questions

Interaction

11. What will I say and what will I do: what is my script?

11.1 Welcome and introduction:

11.2 Open the activity: background and what the activity is about

11.3 Main Activity (content): what are the steps and key points: and what will I say and do in each step? What of the knowledge will I share? What props and resources will I need for each step?

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

11.4 Ending of the activity: sum up the activity and thank participants

Special Notes:

- Payment by tour members: included or not included in tour price?
- **Risks:**
- **How can I manage the risks:**