



“Family Friendly”

Activities for your site – forty suggestions!

Why do educational and interpretative activities?

- Helps develop an appreciation and understanding of the site for the visitor – enhances their experience and enjoyment of a site
- Encourages repeat visits in the future and develops a new audience
- Fosters an appreciation and passion for heritage

Before you start, consider:

- What is your site; what date/what function/who lived there?
- What is the main thing/s which is/are important about your site?
- Resources – what resources do you have available (include time & money)
- Keep it simple – don't over-stretch your resources and volunteers with too many ambitious activities.

Quick & Cheap Ideas

1. Things to touch!

Everyone likes the opportunity to touch things. Can you provide a number of objects associated with the building which people can pick up and look at? If so, put them on display and invite people to come and handle them.

2. Guess the Object

If you have any objects that are not now in everyday use associated with your building, ask young people to identify them. Examples include a record player (!), a mangle or mincer. Either provide the answers in another part of the building (so people have to hunt for them) or run this as a competition.

3. Colouring sheets

Is there a picture of the building or interiors you could use for colouring? Ask a talented individual to draw the building or parts of it to colour. People from the past – are there any pictures of relevant period costume? Find a colouring book with relevant pictures and use these (check copyright before hand).



4. Colouring Competition

Provide a picture/s for young people to colour. Alternatively, ask them to draw a part of your building or a specific object.

5. Crayon Rubbing

Like brass rubbing but using crayons. Warning: Experiment with suitable paper and suitable 'items' to rub first!

6. Stencils

Buy a pre-prepared relevant stencil pack for children to trace around and then colour in. Create your own stencils by using thick card and cutting out images from this.

7. Quiz Sheets

Use the examples listed to provide inspiration for a quiz sheet about your site.

8. Word Search

Use the examples listed to provide inspiration for a word search.

9. Produce a jigsaw

Take some photographs of the building or of an interior or feature. Blow this up and mount on cardboard. Cut up into a jigsaw, which can be reassembled time and time again!

10. 'I' Spy

Provide pictures of objects or locations which have to be found (you could provide these on one sheet). Alternatively provide a sheet with prefixed letters and clues e.g. 'S_____ '(9 letters) Helps people get to the first floor.

11. Storytelling

Do you have the skills to tell a gripping story about your building or the people that lived there?

12. Children's Tour

Any tour which involves ghosts or spine tingling stories, are usually successful, but it is quite difficult to achieve and keep a captive audience!

13. Traditional Games

Provide a number of traditional games for your site, based on the date when the building was constructed. Ensure you have adequate space for this and that you provide

instructions e.g. type these up and then laminate them. Examples include: skipping, hop scotch, marbles, snap, Happy Families etc

14. Face Painting

Face Paints can be bought from many arts and crafts shops. If you have a talented artist, does your site provide inspiration for face painting? Perhaps if you have any paintings or carvings of birds or animals you can recreate these. Some artistic licence may be required – did your property ever see dances taking place? If so, offer face painted masks ... A word of caution – some children have allergies to oil based face paints – so do check with a parent first!

15. Poetry Competition

A type of poem growing in popularity at the moment is Haiku poetry – a Japanese 3-line poem, each line following a set pattern: Line 1 is 5 syllables, Line 2, 7 and Line 3 is 5. An example could be: Line 1: Beautiful Windows, Line 2: Red, Yellow, Blue and Green Glass Line 3: I will remember. Provide some examples and then ask young people to create their own poems – either using the Haiku format, or perhaps completing a limerick with the starting line ‘There once was a building (site) I went to...’

16. Then & Now

This exercise asks people to compare what people had in the past (perhaps dated to the age of the building if appropriate) with what people have now. This can be done in sentence format or in pictures for the very young. Some examples include : Then: Horse & Cart Now: Cars & Trucks. Then: Slate & Chalk Now: Computers.

More time consuming (but still cheap!) ideas

17. Site Appropriate ‘Fill-in’s’

These are based on specific site activities where there is an association with a particular period or culture e.g. Design Your Own Coat of Arms (medieval sites), spell your name on a Cartouche (Egyptian Hieroglyphs etc). A template would need to be produced along with the appropriate examples or alphabets. Another idea is based around any people who may have lived in the building or pictures of people displayed inside – provide the outline for a ‘Wanted’ poster.

18. Crossword

Slightly more work than a word search or quiz but just as straightforward.

19. Feature Hunt

If the building has a number of different patterns, reproduce these on a sheet with a checklist, which can be ticked off when each is identified. Alternatively, provide pictures of certain pictures to find e.g. window, door, hinge, ceiling design, floor pattern etc.

20. Star Hunt

Place a number of large brightly coloured numbered stars around the building/location. Provide an identification sheet, which can be filled in as each star is discovered, until the sheet is complete. Can you provide a prize for completed sheets?

21. Treasure Hunt

Similar to above, but clues must be provided which lead to the next star in a certain order. To avoid cheating, at the star provide a question about the room or object, which the star is next to so each has to be visited in turn. Again, provide a prize.

22. Estate Agents Description

Ask older children to provide written descriptions for each room open based on how an estate agent would describe it. You may need to provide an example along with some choice words e.g. period property = very old! For this it would be best to provide a pre-printed sheet with boxes for each of the rooms the young people can describe. This could be run as a competition.

23. Graffiti Board

This involves providing a large board for people to write comments on or to stick to. The board could be thick cardboard which can either be written directly onto, or 'Post-It' notes can be stuck to. The latter option is probably better since 'Post-It's' can be removed easily if need be! Provide open questions on the boards and let people write their answers on 'Post-It's' which can be stuck under the appropriate question. A main title could be 'Tell us what you think ...' and then there could be several sub-titles e.g. 'About our building', 'About Heritage Open Days'. The 'Post-It's' could be colour-coded as well so that 'yellow' are positive points and 'blue' are negative points.

24. Large story boards to fill in

Produce a story about the history of the building or an associated person on a large board. Take out ten or so key words and replace with blank spaces. Reproduce these 'missing' words on card which fits the gaps and stick Velcro pads on the gaps and on the back of the individual words so people can fill in the gaps. Ask people to complete the story. You may need to provide a sheet asking people to take the words down ready for the next family.

25. Time Trail

Similar to the above idea but producing sentences concerned with the building and events through time. Ask people to put them in order.

26. It's all Greek (Latin) to me

If the site has a Roman or Greek association provide an opportunity to learn some Latin! Provide pictures of some basic words (e.g. dog, boy, chariot etc) and ask people to match the Latin word to the picture. You may need to provide hints. There are simple Latin storybooks to buy, but they may cost more than £10.00.

27. Using maps of the local area

Obtain a number of maps showing the local area and ask people to mark on key features on each e.g. historic features, where they live etc

28. Creating a 3-D model

Using the principles applied to make a cube from one piece of paper, can you reproduce a 'flat pack' version of your building for families to cut and paste together? You'd need to provide fairly thick card and safety scissors and glue on site, or let them take the plans away as something to do at home.

More expensive ideas

29. Using aerial photographs of the local area.

The National Monuments Record in Swindon (ask the Outreach Manager for more information) has a huge number of aerial photographs covering most of the country. Using a National Grid Reference, it may be possible to see if there are a number of photographs available over a number of years e.g. 1940s, 1960s and 1980s including your building. If there are, these can be exhibited and a number of questions asked for people to answer e.g. can you see this building/this site. What's different, what's the same?

30. Traditional Games

Similar to 13 but more expensive examples include building blocks, ball & cup, chess, ludo, nine men's morris etc

31. Pottery reconstruction.

Buy several identical replica pots that date to the original construction of your building or site. Smash all but one of these carefully into six or so pieces leaving one to use as a

'model.' Provide these pots with some masking tape for people to stick back together. This is a basic model showing how archaeologists reconstruct pottery that is found on excavations.

32. Making Pottery

Cheap modelling clay can be bought for young people to have a go at 'coiled' pots. This involves rolling out 'snake like' pieces and building them up to make a pot. An example may need to be provided. There is a type of special clay that hardens without needing to be fired. Additionally some stiff card will need to be provided for the pots to be started on and taken home. These bases can also have names written on them so pots can be claimed later.

33. Food from the Past

What do we have now that people from the past didn't have? Provide a number of pictures of fruit and vegetables (for example) or the real things at a distance and ask people to work out what came from what period – in particular from the period in which the building dates from. Provide some examples of recipes from the relevant period for people to take home and try.

34. Making hats, clothing or jewellery

This would require the use of a template with clear instructions. A number of arts and crafts based shops provide books containing templates along with the relevant equipment needed.

35. Mock Excavations

Using safety sand (which can be bought in toyshops for outdoor sandpits) create one large 'excavation' site in an enclosed space (e.g. a sandpit) or in a number of smaller containers (e.g. ice-cream tubs or plant holders). Bury a variety of objects which represent a certain period or theme and ask people to excavate – using small trowels or plastic spoons.

36. Access to the Internet

If you can provide a laptop or PC, there are a number of websites, which can be used to provide activities during HODs. Does your site have a website which can be displayed? If not, then use www.schoolhistory.co.uk.

37. Skills from the Past

Do you have anyone who could demonstrate skills from the past e.g. carding or spinning wool. Other examples include making corn dollies, basket weaving, wood or stone carving. A word of warning – these have health & safety requirements and may also effect Sun Alliance's insurance conditions.

Longer term opportunities

38. Involve young people in interpreting your site

Get a local youth group involved in helping to interpret your site. There may be local Guide & Scouts groups (who have heritage based badges to complete) in your area. More about this below.

39. Involve your local school

Can you involve your local school in providing some interpretation or activities? You may be able to interest them by approaching this through the Citizenship requirements of the National Curriculum.

40. Work with other HOD buildings in your area

Can you work with several other buildings taking part in HOD to produce a children's trail? Simple activities could be provided at each site (such as those included in 1-15) but a sheet of questions or things to spot between each of the sites could also be produced to give families extra information or things to look out for in the neighbourhood.

Getting young people involved in your HODs programme...

Feedback suggests that HODs organisers often have difficulty in finding ways to get children age 12+ interested in visiting HODs events. Activities could be used to engage this age group during the period leading up to the HODs weekend.

Linking with children and young people's groups that are already up and running is an excellent way of doing this. Contact your local youth agency to find out what is running in your local area. During the summer holidays play schemes and youth clubs could be contacted and asked if they would like to run craft activity sessions, based on the historic environment locally.

For instance:

Ask a local cubs and scouts group to make a model of the buildings involved in your town during the month leading up to the event. The models can then be displayed in the buildings with cubs and scouts bringing parents along to see their handy work.

Or:

Ask a local youth club to make the temporary weathervanes in a few weeks before the event. Put them all out on display as a creative show in the gardens of the building and ask children to come and collect them on the day. You can even encourage the local papers to come down for a photo call if they know there is going to be a very visual photo-opportunity with young people on hand for a smiley picture!

Or:

If you have the resources, suggest youth workers take their groups on tours of the local area, armed with disposable cameras. Ask the children to photograph the places or buildings in their neighbourhood most special to them. Make an exhibition of the photos with captions by the photographers for the HODs weekend.

