

## The Top 33 Hints for Better Interpretation

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1. Passion and enthusiasm are more important than knowledge.
2. Be yourself. Do what works for you, but don't be afraid to try something new.
3. Use a theme!!!
4. Stick with your site's mission; in other words, your theme should match your mission.
5. Pick 3 to 5 main points.
6. Stay with your theme or re-write it to make it work.
7. No script and no note cards!!! Contrary to popular opinion, you cannot hand someone a script and they will be a good interpreter/naturalist.
8. Don't fact vomit! No lesson plan. No lecture. You don't have to test your audience!
9. Be accurate. If you don't know something say, "I don't know, but let's try to find the answer."
10. Don't be afraid of silence.
11. Less is more. Leave the audience wanting more. Don't you want them to come back?
12. Take advantage of the interpretive moment, tie it to your theme, and don't go often on tangents.
13. Where appropriate, provide hands-on items.
14. Involve your audience; use the senses.
15. Don't show and tell. It is not about you, but the message and visitor experience.
16. A story example can be a good thing. Use personal examples, but don't talk about yourself.
17. Provide for your audience needs. Listen to and observe your audience.
18. Give them something theme-related to take home.
19. Be prepared. PRACTICE! Try the projector first. Hike the trail before the program. Find out about your audience in advance.
20. Evaluate your presentation.
21. Use a theme with exhibits, posters, newsletters, fliers, etc.
22. Remember – hook, line, and sinker.
23. And think invitation: who, what, where, when, and remember: simple, colorful, and concise.
24. For exhibits – what one thing do you want them to know? Use a theme not a title. Hands-on and interactive strengthen your message.
25. PowerPoint is powerful and cheap (but don't abuse it.)
26. Use other people. Brainstorm. Have someone proofread, everything.
27. Make your boss look good.
28. Read and/or get training. Keep doing it.
29. Stay in touch with modern culture and trends.
30. Be creative. Do exercises to help your creativity.
31. Look for ideas and make them your own.
32. Everything should answer the question, "So what?"
33. Cyndi's Rule – *It is more important for your visitor to leave with a positive impression than to know your theme, mission, etc.*



## Interpretation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture

1. To spark an interest, interpreters must relate the subject to the lives of the people in their audience.
2. The purpose of interpretation goes beyond providing information to reveal the deeper meaning and truth.
3. The interpretive presentation – as a work of art – should be designed as a story that informs, entertains, and enlightens. The purpose of the interpretive story is to inspire and to provoke people to broaden their horizons.
4. Interpretation should present a complete theme or thesis and address the whole person.
5. Interpretation for children, teenagers, and seniors – when these comprise uniform groups – should follow fundamentally different approaches.
6. Every place has a history. Interpreters can bring the past alive to make the present more enjoyable and the future more meaningful.
7. Technology can reveal the world in new ways. However, incorporating this technology into the interpretive program must be done with foresight and thoughtful care.
8. Interpreters must concern themselves with the quantity and quality (selection and accuracy) of the information presented. Focused, well researched, interpretation will be more powerful than a longer discourse.
9. Before applying the arts of interpretation, the interpreter must be familiar with basic communication techniques. Quality interpretation depends on the interpreter's knowledge and skills, which must be continually developed over time.
10. Interpretive writing should address what readers would like to know, with authority of wisdom and its accompanying humility and care.
11. The overall interpretive program must be capable of attracting support – financial, volunteer, political, administrative – whatever support is needed for the program to flourish.
12. Interpretation should instill in people the ability, and the desire, to sense beauty in their surroundings – to provide spiritual uplift and to encourage resource preservation.
13. Interpreters can promote optimal experiences through intentional and thoughtful program and facility design.
14. Passion is the essential ingredient for powerful and effective interpretation – passion for the resource and those people who come to be inspired by it.

### **Interpretation Resource List**

*Environmental Interpretation*, ISBN 1-55591-902-2

*Interpretation by Design*, ISBN 1-879931-25-7

*Interpretation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ISBN 1-57167-522-1

*Interpretive Planning*, ISBN 1-879931-12-5

*Interpreting Our Heritage*, ISBN 0-8078-4016-5

*Interpretation of Cultural and Natural Resources*, ISBN 1-892123-39-7

*Personal Interpretation*, ISBN 1-879931-06-0

<http://www.mointerp.net/> Membership \$15/year

<http://www.interpnet.com/> Membership levels: \$25/student, \$50/entry, \$60/basic, and \$80.00/plus

### **Special Training Opportunity!!!**

Missouri Department of Natural Resources/Division of State Parks  
Spring Interpretation Training  
May 23-27, 2010  
Lake of the Ozarks State Park

*Learn about interpretation in an intensive, but fun-filled training.*

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