

Visiting the British Museum with the under 5s



Pre-school group
Looking for jewellery in Room 56

Guide for group leaders
Under 5s

Museum information

The British Museum

Galleries

Charges

Booking a visit

Taught sessions

Museum staff

Travelling to the Museum

Facilities at the Museum

Learning links

Personal development

Language development

Mathematical development

Creative development

Before your visit

Structuring your visit

Suggestions for visit themes

Planning a visit

Preparatory activities: What is in a museum? Museum rules, Off to the museum

During your visit

Visit activities: Senses trail, Hunting for colours, Going potty

20 things to do for 5 minutes

After your visit

Follow-up activities: Make your own museum, My day at the museum,

Museum movement

Additional information

Museum information

The British Museum

- The British Museum is a large national collection of objects from around the world.
- Objects on display date from ancient times to the present day.

Galleries

- There are over 50 public galleries across a lower, main and upper floor.
- All galleries are numbered and locations are shown on the free Museum map available in the Great Court.
- All galleries are fully accessible.
- Objects are displayed in wall cases, free-standing cases and on plinths.
- None of the objects in the galleries may be touched.
- Groups may spend as long as they wish in a gallery and may move freely between different parts of the Museum at a pace which suits them.
- Photographs of objects or your children may be taken in all galleries and public spaces at the Museum (the only exception is in special exhibitions).

Charges

- There is no charge for visiting the British Museum galleries.
- There is no charge for using the facilities in the Schools Lunch Room.
- There is usually a charge for attending a taught session.
- Pre-booked education groups may go in to special exhibitions free of charge.

Booking a visit

- Pre booking is needed for a visit to the Museum.
- Pre-booking is needed to ensure use of the School Lunch Room facilities.
- Pre booking should be done through the British Museum Ticket Office

By post: Ticket Office, British Museum, Great Russell Street,
London WC1B 3DG

By telephone: 020 7323 8181

By email: tickets@britishmuseum.org

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Taught sessions

- The Museum offers a number of taught sessions for nursery aged groups as part of their EYFS offer. Details of these sessions can be found on the Learning pages of the British Museum website.

Museum staff

- All teaching staff working with children during a pre-booked taught session are CRB checked to enhanced disclosure level.
- There are Visitor Services staff in all public spaces who can be approached for directions around the Museum, to report a lost child or to contact a first-aider.

Traveling to the Museum

- The Museum has two main entrances – one at the front on Great Russell Street and one at the back on Montague Place.
- Coaches can drop off and collect at the Museum's Montague Place entrance.
- The nearest London Underground stations are Tottenham Court Road, Holborn and Russell Square.
- The following buses stop near the Museum
1,7,8,19,25,38,55,98,242 stop on New Oxford Street
10, 14,24,29,73,134,390 stop on Tottenham Court Road (northbound) and Gower Street (southbound).
59, 68, X68, 91, 168, 188 stop on Southampton Row.

Facilities at the Museum

- School lunch area with long tables and benches.
- Cloakroom facilities for coats, bags and lunch boxes in School Lunch Room.
- Children's toilets and baby changing room in School Lunch Room. There are also public toilets and baby changing spaces in the Great Court.
- Water fountains in School Lunch Room.

Learning links

A visit to the British Museum can support learning in the following areas:

Personal development

Visiting new places, finding out about the past, travelling around the locality, looking after yourself, finding out about the wider world.

e.g. What is a museum? What was it like before I was alive? How can I travel to the Museum? What will I take for lunch? How do I keep safe in a public space? What is it like in other countries?

Language development

Asking questions, answering questions, reflecting on personal experiences, writing in the environment.

e.g. What will I see at the Museum? What did I find out at the Museum? What did I do at the Museum? What signs did I see at the Museum?

Mathematical development

Colours, shapes, patterns, counting, measuring.

e.g. What colours can I see in the Museum? Can I find something red in this gallery? What shapes can I see in the Museum? Can I find a triangle in the Great Court? Can I see a pattern in this gallery? How many columns are there at the front of the Museum? How many stairs are there up to the front door of the Museum? How big is this gallery in footsteps?

Creative development

Objects made and decorated by other people, finding inspiration for one's own work.

e.g. What are objects made from? How are the objects decorated? Which objects do I like? Which objects will help me make my own pot/necklace/head-dress?

Before your visit

Structuring your visit

When planning a visit think about the themes which you would like to run through the visit and, in particular, how work before the visit will support what the children do on-site and how information collected during the visit can be used afterwards.

An example of this three part visit structure is given below.

Before the visit

Introduce any concepts or themes which the children will meet at the Museum. There may be specific museum vocabulary that the children will need to know such as the word 'gallery' (a museum word for a room).

Explain what the children will be doing during the visit. This may include experiences they will have in the Museum, the type of objects they will be looking at, how they will be collecting information and what they are doing to do with this information after the visit. For example you may be asking the children to look at the African masks on display in Room 25 to collect ideas about the shape, materials and colours used to make the masks before they make their own mask as a follow-up activity.

During the visit

The Museum has plenty of room for small groups to gather so you may want to include time to speak to the whole group and the accompanying adults during the visit. Decide how the children are going to collect information. For example they may be drawing, taking photographs, or talking about the objects while an adult scribes their thoughts.

After the visit

Plan the activities which the children will undertake using the information collected during their visit. For example, an opportunity for the children to reflect on and talk about the visit and their experience of using the Museum as a learning environment, a making activity inspired by Museum objects, or sharing their experience with other children or parents.

Suggestions for visit themes

The Museum galleries and spaces can be used in many different ways. A few examples of themes which can be investigated during a visit to the Museum are given below.

- Experiencing new places – what is a museum, what is in a museum, what is it like to be inside a museum, who else is in the museum?
- Buildings and their uses – what happens in a museum, why do people visit museums, what does a museum look like outside, what does a room in a museum look like, what different activities take place in a museum?
- Now and then – how do we doing something in the present (eating, travelling, wearing jewellery), what objects do we use, what words do we use to describe the activity, did they do this activity in the past, what objects did they use, are the objects the same/different from the objects we use?
- Museum maths – what shapes/colours/patterns can I see in the Museum, what can I find that is very big/small in the Museum, how many stairs up to the front door, how long are the galleries in footsteps, can I find an object that is taller than me?
- Museum words – what words do we use for the different parts of a museum, how would I describe the Museum, what writing can I spot at the Museum, what letters/numbers can I see at the Museum?
- All around the world – what countries do the Museum objects come from, what objects from Africa/China/Britain can I see at the Museum, can I find objects from each of the continents in the Museum?
- Museum animals – what animals can I spot at the Museum, how are the animals shown at the Museum (statues, paintings), how many lions can I find in the Museum, can I see animals standing/lying down/running?

Planning a visit

When you have decided what theme you would like to explore during your visit, such as colour or maths, to the Museum you can start to plan out the before, during and after activities. Planning sheet (1) is an example of how you can plan the different parts of the visit and what will happen on each occasion. Examples of different before, during and after activities are given throughout this guide or you may want to create your own set of activities appropriate to the needs/levels of the children you are working with.

Share the planning with the children so that they know what activities they will be doing during the visit and why.

It is also useful to plan what you, the children and any adult helpers will be doing. For example if you have parents working with some of the children during the visit you may want to invite them to take part in the preparatory and follow-up work. Using Planning sheet (2) enables you to decide what role you would like the different groups of people to take, it can highlight where you may want to include accompanying adults in preparatory work so that they have a good understanding of what the children will be doing or where you may need to organize a particular stage of the visit around available adults. You may also want to note any particular requirements amongst the children or adults (such as mobility needs or supervision ratios) which will affect the visit.

As part of your planning assess any potential risks involved in making an off-site visit with the children. This risk assessment will reflect the particular needs of your group and will need to be completed in line with any institutional guidelines you are expected to follow.

The Museum has information available which you may find useful when planning your visit and completing your own risk assessment.

www.britishmuseum.org/visiting.aspx

Planning sheet (1)

Theme of visit

Before the visit

During the visit

After the visit

Planning sheet (2)

	Group leader	Children	Adult helpers
Before			
During			
After			

Any additional requirements

Preparatory activities

Preparatory activities will prepare the children for their visit to the Museum.

Some examples of preparatory activities are given below.

What is in a museum?

Explore what the children know about museums already. What will be in the Museum? What will they see happening? This is an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary. While talking about the unique features of a museum, such as objects in cases, you may wish to assure the children of the facilities which are there for their comfort such as toilets and somewhere to have lunch. Ask the children for suggestions of what they will see in the Museum and use the answers to complete the *What is in a museum?* sheet. The sheet can be reviewed after the visit to see if they were right.

Museum rules

An opportunity to discuss good museum behaviour and the 'do not touch' rule. Discuss museum behaviour under the headings of respect the objects (e.g. do not touch), respect others (e.g. let other people look at the objects too) and respect yourself (e.g. listen carefully so that you can find out lots of new things). You can also discuss issues around keeping safe and what to do if lost. Write out your rules on the *Museum rules* sheet. A copy of the agreed museum rules could be given to each accompanying adult for reference during the trip. You could review the rules with the children after the visit to decide which were most helpful and if any others would have been useful.

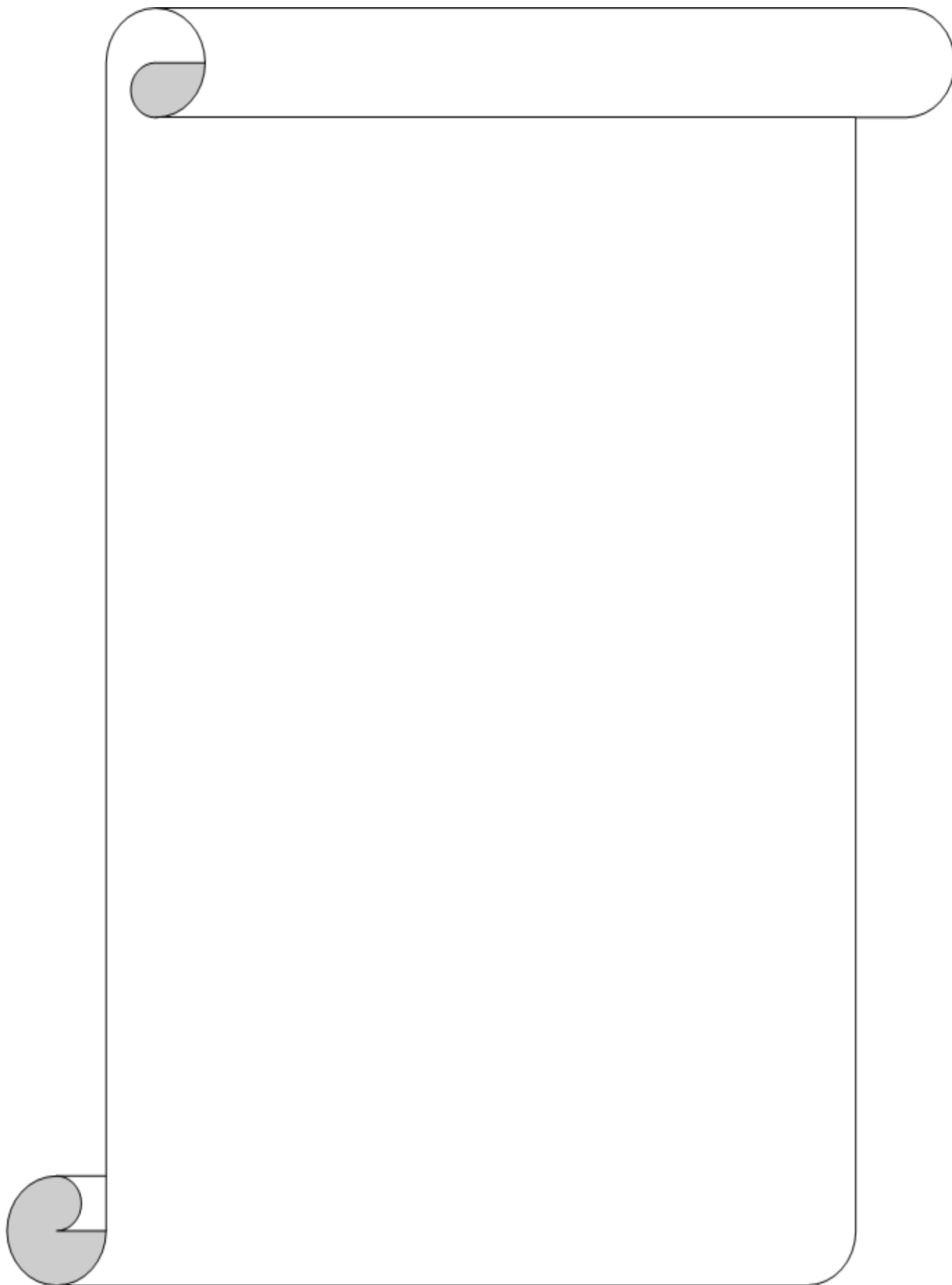
Off to the Museum

Talk to the children about different ways of travelling, e.g. walking, bus, train, and what you take with you when you go out, e.g. money for buying things, a coat to keep warm/dry, a pushchair for the baby. Discuss with the children how they will travel to the Museum and what they will need to take. Decide what to put in the museum bag for your visit to the Museum. What sort of sandwiches, what flavour crisps, orange juice or apple juice, is it cold enough for gloves or hot enough for a sun hat? Use the *Off to the museum* sheet to fill a group bag or ask the children to put three items in their own individual bag.

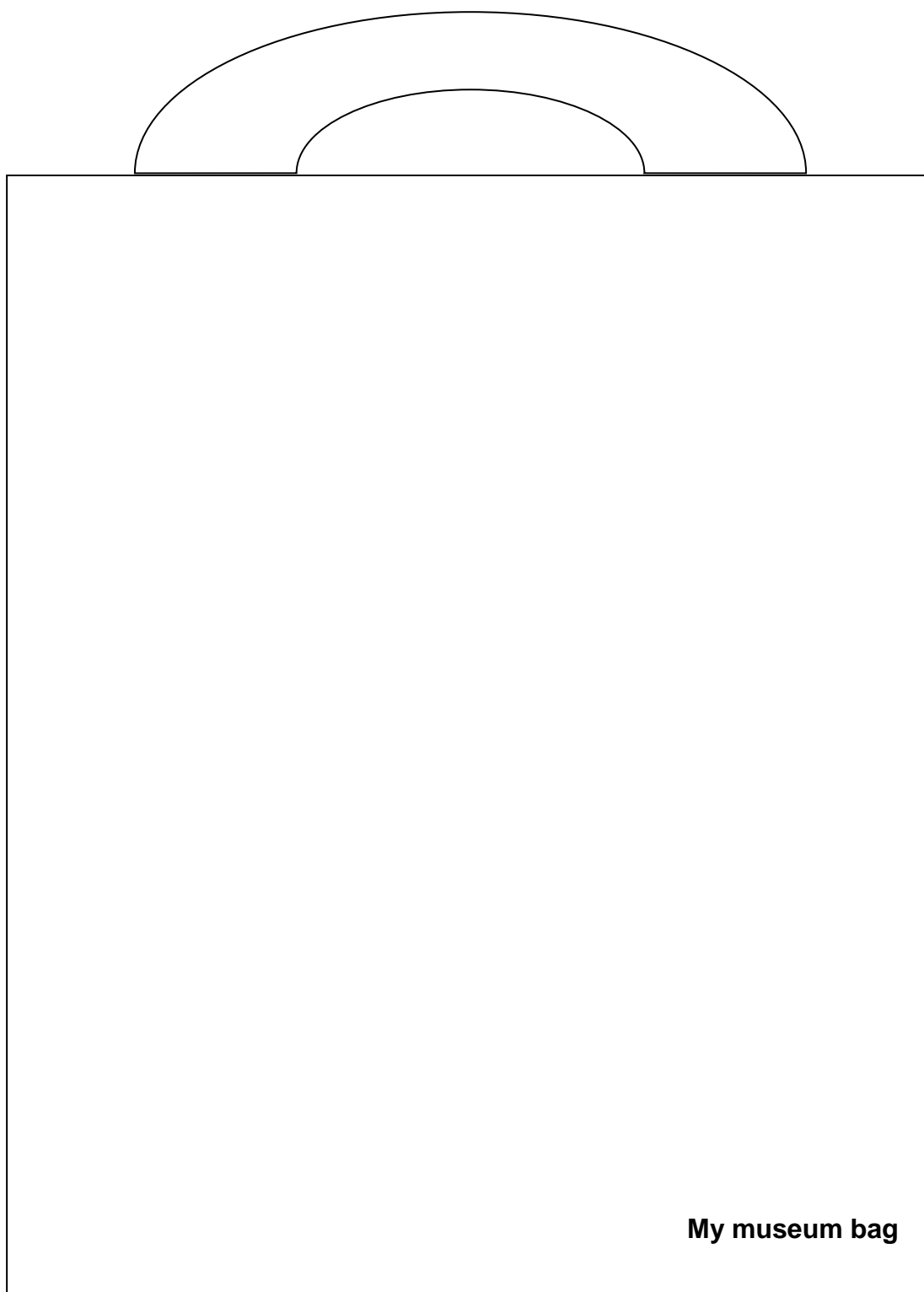
What is in a museum?

	people
objects	

Museum rules



Off to the museum



During your visit

Visit activities

Below are a few examples of activities which you can do during your museum visit with an indication of what you might do before and after. The accompanying sheets are designed to be filled in by the adult working with each group. There is space to record the names of the children in each group on the sheet so that they can review the information they gathered afterwards. The sheets are offered as suggested support for the activities and can be adapted in terms of layout and level of content according to the needs of the children.

Senses trail

By asking the children to focus on what they can see and hear in three contrasting areas of the Museum, this activity helps them to build up an understanding of the Museum environment.

Before: revise the senses, what can you find out using your senses?

During: stand in a Museum space; spend a couple of minutes looking, listening and sniffing; record what you can see, hear and smell on the *Senses Trail* sheet. By providing spare sheets the process can be repeated in other Museum spaces enabling the children to discuss if everywhere in the Museum is the same.

After: review what it was like in the Museum using the collected information. What did the different groups see, hear and smell? Repeat the activity in the outdoor play area or a local building and compare the results to explore similarities and differences between different places.

Hunting for colours

The Museum is awash with colour and galleries such as Room 25 (the Africa gallery) and Room 33 (the China gallery) contain lots of different primary and secondary colours. This activity can be adapted to the level of the children by asking them to look for colours which they are familiar with or which they are learning to recognize and name.

Visiting the British Museum with the under 5s

Before: revise the colours, or introduce new colours, which the children are learning about. Look at some objects, such as a piece of clothing, a decorated mug, a toy, and talk about what colours can be seen on the object.

During: move around the Museum looking for different colours. Keep a tally of which colours you see on the *Hunting for colour* sheet. Add in additional vocabulary as appropriate such as dark blue, light blue, multi-coloured.

After: review the names of the different colours seen at the Museum. Which colour was seen the most often? Which colour was seen least? Paint a museum building using lots of different colours or paint a museum rainbow.

Going potty

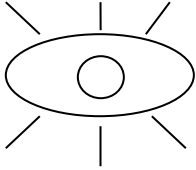
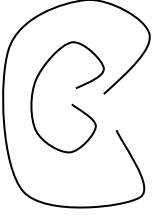

The Museum has many examples of clay pots on display. There is a good selection in Room 49 (Roman Britain), Room 13 (Greek vases) and Room 25 (African pots). These pots can be used as inspiration for the children to make their own clay pots.

Before: look at some clay pots (e.g. terracotta garden pots, china vases). What shape are they, how are they decorated, are they smooth or rough, how heavy are they? Put out some lumps of clay for the children to explore. If you use kiln clay it can be re-moistened with water to stop it drying out and kept in a sealed plastic bag.

During: look for pots around the Museum and collect inspiration for making your own pots. Take photographs of the different pots chosen. Use the *Going potty* sheet for group mark making by asking each child to draw on a line, shape or design they spot on a pot -not the whole pot just a bit of decoration they like.

After: Draw a pot outline on a large sheet of paper and ask children to add different lines, shapes and designs they found on the Museum pots. Use this as inspiration for each of the children to make their own pot using air-drying clay. The children can incise or stamp lines and shapes on to the damp clay or paint the pot when it has dried. Create your very own class pot display.

Senses trail

<p>We are standing in ...</p>	
<p>We can see ...</p> 	
<p>We can hear ...</p> 	
<p>We can smell ...</p> 	

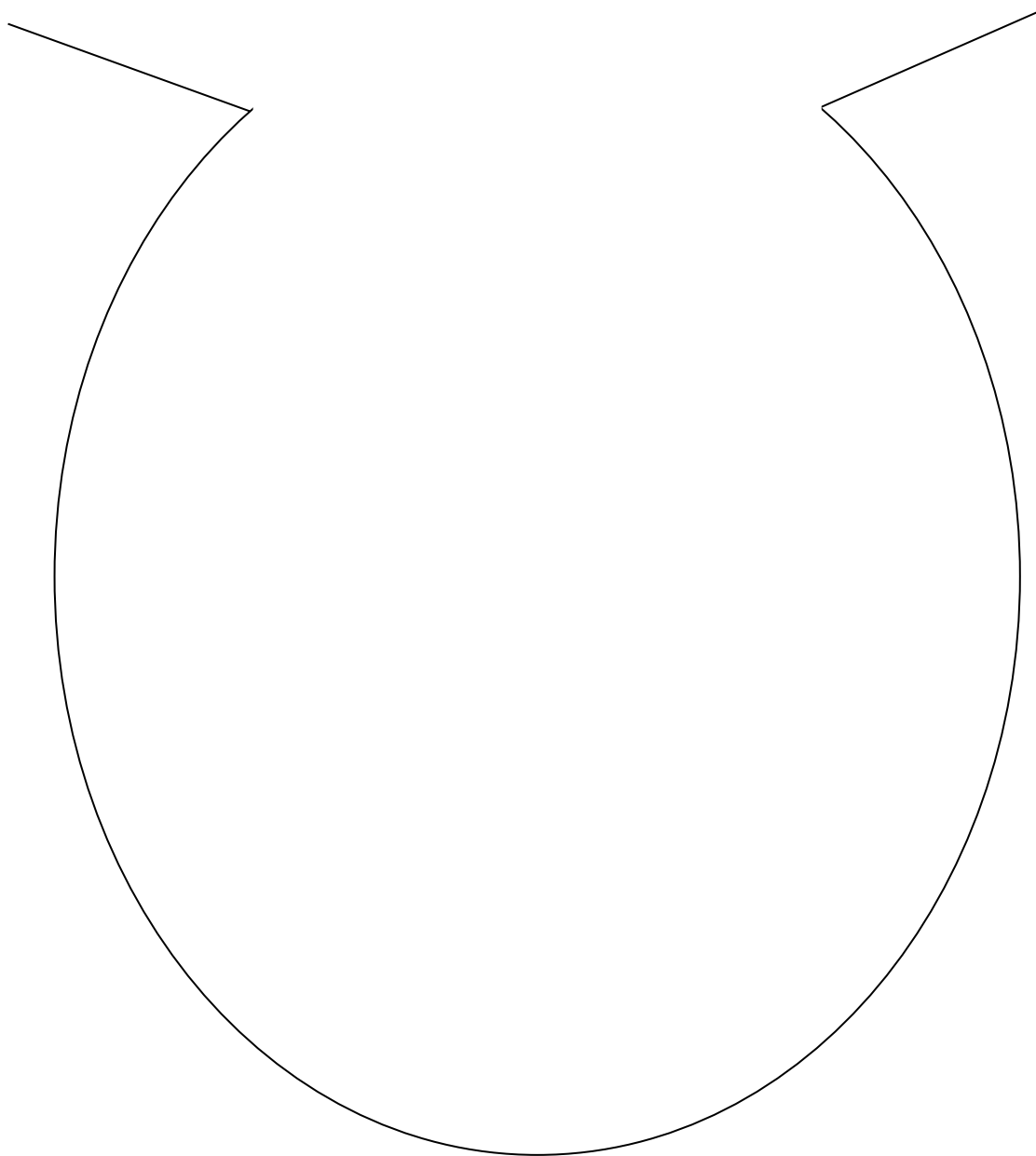
This senses trail was completed by _____.

Hunting for colours

colour	tally	total
red		
blue		
green		
yellow		
brown		
purple		

These colours were spotted by _____.

Going potty



This pot has been decorated by _____

Visiting the British Museum with the under 5s

20 things to do for 5 minutes

1. Lie down in the Great Court and count the triangles in the roof.
2. Take 10 large steps from here to there.
3. Go to Room 4 and look for lions.
4. Have your photograph taken with a Roman emperor in Room 70.
5. Go to Room 1, sit down by a case and point out your favourite object.
6. Hug a column on the colonnade.
7. Run a race on the east lawn.
8. Sit down, close your eyes and listen.
9. Play 'I spy'.
10. Go to Room 33, find an Indian statue and copy the pose.
11. Walk all the way around the Round Reading Room in the Great Court.
12. Climb the front stairs from the bottom to the top. Phew!
13. Feeling tired? Sit on a bench and watch the world go by.
14. Walk by the café and find out what the others in your group like to drink.
15. Go to Gallery 25 and find the *Tree of Life*. What animals can you spot?
16. Find the biggest object in the Museum.
17. Now find the smallest!
18. Go up to Room 38/39 to find out what the time is. Listen out for the chimes!
19. Clap your hands in the Great Court and see if there is an echo.
20. Go to Room 33, find the Chinese objects and look for dragons!

After your visit

After the visit give the children time to reflect on their time at the Museum. Each activity in the 'During your visit' section of this guide has a suggested follow-up activity which builds on information gathered during the visit. Below are some more follow-up ideas based on the experience of going to a museum.

Make your own museum

Choose a theme for the museum. Objects could be selected under the heading 'My favourite activity' or might involve objects brought from home. Alternatively provide the children with a group of 'old' objects and ask them to arrange them as a display adding written information as appropriate to the level of the children. The home corner area could be set up as a museum.

My day at the Museum

Ask the children to recall what they did during the visit. Collect the answers and help the children to arrange them in to the order in which they occurred during the day. Ask the children to draw/paint something they did at the museum and add the pictures to the list to create an illustrated account of the day. Stick visit photographs in to a museum scrapbook for the children to browse and discuss. Make a display and invite parents to pop in and see what happened on the trip with the children acting as guides. Don't forget to include a visit to the classroom museum.

Museum movement

Ask the children to reflect on the movement they saw at the museum – people walking, people standing, people climbing stairs, frozen statues, shuffling queues, people drinking. Use these as the basis for a music and movement activity where the children might walk quick to fast music as they imagine walking from gallery to gallery, stand frozen in silence like one of the museum statues, huff and puff up some stairs to heavy, stomping music as they imagine going up to the top floor of the museum, and creep around the museum at night to some spooky music!

Additional information

Whiteboard presentations

These are available to download from the Learning pages of the British Museum website:

www.britishmuseum.org/learning

Particularly suitable for this age group are the presentations on colour, shape and pattern in the Museum.

Explore

Objects from the British Museum can be seen online at

www.britishmuseum.org/explore/introduction.aspx

This area of the website includes over 5000 pictures and descriptions of Museum objects. The pictures can be printed out and used to make an object collage, pinned around the room for the children to spot, cut into pieces for an instant object jig-saw, taken to the Museum to spot in the galleries, used as a talking point in small groups, sorted, made into a museum picture book.