

Children's University Lectures

Tips, Hints and Guidance

The Children's University (or CU) aims to liberate, inspire and raise aspiration, and in particular aspiration for learning, among children aged 7 to 14. It does this by providing and facilitating high quality 'out-of-school-hours' learning opportunities for children and seeks, as a priority, to reach those children most in need of such provision.

Where 'grown-up' Universities talk about the 3 'A's of Awareness, Aspiration and Achievement, the Children's University focuses on learning's 5 'W's and 1 'H': the What, When, Where, Who, How and crucially the Why or "*The Why: a window onto another world!*"

As part of the localised delivery of the national Children's University, which includes partnerships (or win-winships) with Higher and Further Education Institutions, CU Lectures aim to contribute to the inspiration and aspiration agendas. They also aim to provide a means by which the win-winship between local Children's Universities and Higher and Further Education can be strengthened. The main aspirational challenge, however, remains: can we jointly entice 7 to 14 year olds to enrol for high quality CU Lectures after school, at weekends or during school holidays? And will they be so good that children will come back for more?!

The **Tips, Hints and Guidance** framework has been produced to provide a child-focussed, high quality delivery tool which can (and should) be localised - its quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation will need to take place through the local Children's University within this national framework. The **Tips, Hints and Guidance** framework is a result of consultation nationally and internationally and its contributors include local Children's Universities, EUCU.NET, Liverpool Hope University, Oxford Brookes University, Royal Northern College of Music, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, University of Cambridge and The Royal Institution of Great Britain.

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Tips, Hints and Guidance

1. Before

Preparation

- The CU Lecture should have a title and a 'title question' (e.g. "*The Digestive System or Why Do Trumps Smell?*")
- The CU Lecture should answer in about 35 minutes a 'why' question from an academic specialism or possibly a conundrum or a question e.g. "*The Internet: Exciting Playground or Dangerous Minefield?*" or "*Does Britain Have Talent?*"
- Following on from the official CU Lecture there should be about 10 minutes for questions and answers; up to a further 30 minutes should be made available for the children to approach the CU Lecturer individually and informally after the CU Lecture
- An synopsis of the CU Lecture with a short biography of the CU Lecturer should be submitted to the organisers some 3 weeks before the event; children should receive these well before the CU Lecture takes place to prepare

2. During

Focus on key issues

- The duration of the CU Lecture should be about 35 minutes
- Begin at the beginning: Title and 'title question'
- Formulate key messages in order to answer the 'why' question
- Set out objectives from the start: What will children learn from the lecture and take home with them?
- At the end of the lecture answer the 'title question'

Build a clear structure

- Keep the structure of the lecture simple
- Formulate the key messages at the beginning
- Divide the 'title question' into sub-questions
- Return to sub-questions and the 'title question' to clarify contexts

Demonstrate connections

- Establish links between information (old and new), connections and the 'title question'
- Build where possible on what children already know and challenge their thinking
- Explain suppositions: Why is certain information important to the 'title question'?

Illustrate the abstract

- The least possible amount of abstract data
- Illustrate quantitative data (e.g. *"After the war when your grandparents were your age"* or *"This space is the size of 3 double-decker busses"*)
- Explain by examples, comparisons and analogies
- Contextualise figures clearly (e.g. *"How many years would it take Lewis Hamilton in his McLaren to get from Earth to Venus?"*)
- Illustrate abstract content through a story (anecdote, real event); describe unusual circumstances leading to a significant achievement or discovery

Visualise, illustrate and stage

- Are there illustrations or examples of the places or exhibits in the presentation that can be used: pictures, charts, graphics, computer animations, audio input, a joke to set a scene, or a live experiment?
- Avoid multimedia fireworks!

Use plain English

- Use simple language and short sentences, explaining difficult words
- 'Translate' and visualise jargon (e.g. *"Plate tectonics: How did an architectural concept enter the language of geology?"* - *"An egg with a cracked shell visualises how the single plates of the earth's crust collide"*)

Encourage inquisitiveness and stimulate interest

- As a rule children are keen on the new, the unusual, the spectacular and the unknown
- And children value the positive
- Children associate with examples, comparisons and values from 'their worlds' (e.g. *"As well-known as Harry Potter"*, *"As mad as Jack Sparrow"*)
- Children generally process information more slowly than grown-ups - a clearly articulated and appropriate manner of speaking is desirable
- As part of questions and answers, contributions from the floor should first be repeated before they are answered or discussed

3. After

Evaluation, sharing good practice and future planning

- CU Lecturers to share their findings, views and suggestions for improvement in writing with the organisers
- Children's views to be collated particularly in relation to concept, structure and delivery in order to contribute to future planning
- Recorded CU Lectures to be web-based for (inter)national dissemination