

Annex C: **Interpretive Competencies**

Mall Rangers should take every opportunity to develop their interpretive skills. The NPS Interpretive Development Program provides a framework for such professional growth. The following information is from the official NPS website.

Grounded in "Ranger Careers," the Interpretive Development Program identifies essential "Benchmark Competencies" (knowledge, skills, and abilities) for all interpreters in Ranger Careers positions. Interpretive rangers in the NPS or any partner organization can now plan a relevant, need-based training strategy that is cost- and time-efficient in developing interpretive excellence. Click on any underscored module to link directly to the curriculum for that competency.

"THE FOUNDATION" OF THE CURRICULUM:

Fulfilling the NPS Mission: The Process of Interpretation (Module 101)
(Recommended for ALL NPS interpreters, especially those working on the benchmark competencies.)

THE ESSENTIAL BENCHMARK COMPETENCIES

Entry Level Competencies:

- Demonstrating Successful Informal Visitor Contacts (Module 102)
- Preparing and Presenting an Effective Interpretive Talk (Module 103)

Developmental Level Competencies:

- Prepare and Present an Effective Conducted Activity (Module 210)
- Prepare and Present an Interpretive Demonstration or
Other Illustrated Program (Module 220)
- Effective Interpretive Writing (Module 230)
- Develop and Present an Effective Curriculum-based Education Programs (Module 270)

Full Performance Level Competencies:

- Planning Park Interpretation (Module 310)
- Interpretive Media Development (Module 311)
- Leading Interpreters: Training and Coaching (Module 330)
- Interpretive Research and Resource Liaison (Module 340)

ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES

Visitor Needs and Characteristics (Module 110)
Personal Safety and Security (Module 111)
Identifying and Removing Bias from Interpretive
and Educational Programming (Module 201)
Partners in Interpretation (Module 320)
Interpretation of Archeological Resources (Module 440)

Last update: April 21, 2000

<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/ab-competency.htm>

**Welcome to the Interpretive Development Program
Website!**

The Interpretive Development Program is designed to foster professionalism in interpretation in the National Park Service. This site provides you with immediate access to the latest curriculum, resources, contacts, FAQ's and other information you need to develop your personalized training program for interpretive excellence. The centerpiece of the curriculum is Module 101--Fulfilling the NPS Mission: The Process of Interpretation. Although written with a NPS audience in mind, many other interpretive professionals have found the materials and ideas valuable in guiding and developing their own interpretive effectiveness. The materials on this site are dynamic, and they will react annually to the changing needs, feedback, and suggestions received by those pursuing professional development in interpretation.

The program and the curriculum that supports it were developed by field interpreters, for field interpreters. The intent of the program is to provide you with a means to personally pursue your professional development, regardless of whether a training course is available or not. Look through the entire site to familiarize yourself. Get to know the structure and format of the site and the curriculum, and most importantly, the standards written by your peers for professional excellence in interpretation. Use the curriculum to design your own developmental activities, or use it to assess the potential value of in-house training or external courses that may be available to you. Visit the site regularly to stay up-to-date on changes and upgrades as they occur. At the bottom of all documents is a "Last update" line to help you stay current. The site can be many things, but above all, view it as an entry-way to personal, professional development and growth as a NPS interpreter! WELCOME!

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<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/allabout.htm>

Editor: NPS Training Manager for Interpretation, Education, and Cooperating Associations

Entry Level Park Ranger Interpreter

MODULE 101

Title: FULFILLING THE NPS MISSION: THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION

PURPOSE

This is the cornerstone module of the curriculum which establishes the foundation for ALL that follows in an interpreter's professional development. It is a natural evolution in thinking about the art and science of interpretation, which combines the essence of the past with the dynamism of the present to shape the future of our profession. Every decision an interpreter makes for any interpretive effort (talk, walk, tour, wayside, publication, etc.) must be based on the fundamental philosophies contained within this module. Moreover, a successful interpreter, or interpretive supervisor/manager will be able to articulate the value and effect of their interpretive choices to others through a sound grasp of the principles contained within this module. Each essential competency for interpreters reflects elements of Module 101, therefore, it is strongly recommended that the study of any module/component of the curriculum include connections to Module 101.

DESCRIPTION

This block of instruction introduces all interpretive and non- interpretive park rangers to interpretive competencies.

PURPOSE, and provides them with the foundation to successfully demonstrate interpretive competency requirements throughout their professional development. These concepts are fundamental to successful interpretation, regardless of the method of delivery.

AUDIENCE

All park rangers and other NPS staff with public contact responsibility, both permanent term and seasonal, as well as cooperating association employees, volunteers, concession employees, and park partner employees

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion, learners will be able to:

- describe ways in which meanings may be revealed by creating linkages through tangible and intangible resources;
- explain the interpreter's role to facilitate the visitors' experience and relationship to the resource, and how this relationship provides an opportunity for stewardship;
- describe how interpretation meets the National Park Service and site mission/ objectives;
- describe how the "interpretive equation" affects the success of interpretive efforts;
- establish a personal foundation to develop interpretive effectiveness through understanding interpretive purpose and techniques.

TOPICS

Interpretive purpose, mission, and who you speak for/represent; tangible/intangible linkages and universal concepts; characteristics of an effective interpreter; the interpretive

equation; the visitor "Bill of Rights;" 3-Ms of interpretation, stewardship through interpretation.

DELIVERY

Park or cluster level seasonal or group training; mentoring, independent study, part of servicewide training offering; university sources; can use video, classroom, satellite uplink.

COMPONENTS

Why We Do Interpretation: Meeting the NPS Mission

What Interpretation Is: Tangibles, Intangibles, and Universal Concepts

How Interpretation Works: The Interpretive Equation

TARGET

Within first six months of appointment to interpretive duties.

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<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/module.htm>

Editor: NPS Training Manager for Interpretation, Education, and Cooperating Associations

Entry Level Park Ranger Interpreter

MODULE 102

Title: DEMONSTRATING SUCCESSFUL INFORMAL VISITOR CONTACTS*

Recommended Pre-requisite: Module 101

PURPOSE

Informal visitor contacts present opportunities that can have immediate and lasting impacts on the public's enjoyment and respect for park resources. The ability to assess visitor needs and respond appropriately are necessary to achieve quality service. Orientation is often a basic need, and a precursor to what might build from that point in shaping a visitor's experience. Information well-understood and delivered underpins all interpretation. This module enables an interpreter to properly assess visitor needs, select among alternative responses, provide basic and in-depth information, and recognize and provide opportunities for a visitor to make intellectual and/or emotional connections with meanings of the resource. The three components of this module are the foundation of a defined strategy for informal visitor contacts in parks.

AUDIENCE

Individuals with informal, spontaneous public contact responsibilities in National Park areas including park rangers and other NPS staff, cooperating association employees, volunteers, concessionaires, and park partners.

OBJECTIVES At the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- develop strategies which provide opportunities for quality service;
- move along a "decision path" between orientation, information, and interpretation as appropriate, without inflicting any service on a visitor;
- demonstrate effective informal interpretation.

TOPICS

Visitor orientation, information, and informal interpretive services; basic communications skills; assessing basic audience needs and deciding how/when to end contacts; quality service; working with upset visitors; identifying sources and resources to assist information and interpretation; local and competing/complementary information sources; understanding the information "continuum" and the information network; recognizing and providing opportunities for intellectual and emotional connections for visitors.

DELIVERY

Park and cluster-level seasonal or group training; servicewide courses; university courses; Traditional and distance learning in classrooms; computer- based training packages and CD-ROMs.

BENCHMARK COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT

A log of eight visitor contact entries, describing a range of informal orientation /information/ interpretive interactions with a variety of audiences in different settings

within the interpreter's park or site; each submitted as a short answer or narrative format, for certification review.

COMPONENTS

- Quality Service: Responding to Audience Needs
- Information Services and Sources
- Informal Interpretation

TARGET

Within first year of appointment.

Last update: April 20, 2000

<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/102/module.htm>

Editor: NPS Training Manager for Interpretation, Education, and Cooperating Associations

Entry Level Park Ranger Interpreter

MODULE 103

Title: PREPARING AND PRESENTING AN EFFECTIVE INTERPRETIVE TALK*

Recommended Pre-requisite: Module 101

PURPOSE

This module combines the many skills and techniques required to be a competent public speaker with the philosophical interpretive base built in Module 101. The components in this module cover key areas of public speaking. Effective interpretive talks that include cohesive development of ideas that give the audience an opportunity to form its own intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings and significance of the resource. Success will be based on the interpretive philosophy built in Module 101 and the successful use of the mechanics of public speaking contained within this module.

AUDIENCE All park rangers and NPS staff with public contact responsibility, both permanent and seasonal. This includes other staffs with public interpretation responsibilities in National Park areas, such as cooperating association employees, volunteers, concession employees, and park partner employees.

OBJECTIVES At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- present an effective talk which includes and demonstrates a cohesive development of a relevant idea or ideas, without relying on a recital of a chronological narrative or series of related facts, and provide an opportunity for the audience to form an intellectual or emotional connections with the meanings/significance inherent in a resource;
- describe the interpretive talk development and delivery techniques necessary for an effective talk such as themes, goals, objectives, written outline (with citations), use of source materials and research techniques, presentation techniques.

TOPICS

Public speaking skills; accurate and balanced data and historical and scientific research skills; information sources; interpretive effectiveness; themes, goals, objectives and compelling stories; program organization; interpreting in a broader context; techniques for effective programs; interpretive ice-breaker techniques with various groups, questioning strategies, dealing with groups, reading visual clues.

DELIVERY

Classroom and lab, park, cluster, servicewide course for rangers, universities, National Association for Interpretation workshops/seminars, professional training organizations.

BENCHMARK COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT

Prepare and present an effective interpretive talk at a park site demonstrating aspects of objectives listed above, certification through peer-review, completed by a team of two

certifiers. Talk is prepared, presented, videotaped, and submitted for certification upon the employee's and supervisor's concurrence.

COMPONENTS

- Talk Organization
- Interpretive Program Research
- Themes, Goals, and Objectives
- Presentation Techniques
- Delivering an Interpretive Talk and Assessing its Interpretive Value

TARGET

Within first year of appointment.

Developmental Level Park Ranger Interpreter

MODULE 230

Title: EFFECTIVE INTERPRETIVE WRITING*

Recommended prerequisite: Module 101

PURPOSE

Development of clear interpretive writing is critical to public comprehension of park issues, themes, and values. To achieve quality interpretive writing, it is important to write effectively for various audiences and media. Good interpretive writing provides memorable images and ideas that facilitate connections between audiences and resources. These connections can occur before, during, after, or instead of an actual visit. More than a set of mechanical skills, interpretive writing is based on philosophical and ethical underpinnings which move audiences toward stewardship and care for the resource.

This module seeks to provide a framework for professional development as an interpretive writer. It defines interpretive writing as a continuously evolving skill of the professional interpreter, provides guidance for creating written products, and offers developmental suggestions. This module does NOT convey basic writing mechanics or other fundamental skills.

AUDIENCE

Individuals with writing responsibilities in National Park areas including park rangers and other NPS staff, cooperating association employees, volunteers, concessionaires, and park partners.

OBJECTIVES At the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- Describe the process of writing;
- Write for different types of interpretive media;
- Describe implications of copyright and libel laws, agency position, public domain, and bias.

TOPICS

The writing process; types of media and audiences; elements affecting professionalism including plagiarism, libel, and bias.

DELIVERY

Park and cluster-level training; university courses; traditional and distance learning; workshops; peer coaching and mentoring; self study.

BENCHMARK COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT

An original writing sample for a specific written medium, including a statement of intended audience, will be submitted for certification.

COMPONENTS

- The Writing Process
- Writing for Interpretive Media
- Professionalism

TARGET Within 2 years of appointment.

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<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/230/module.htm>

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Developmental Level Park Ranger Interpreter

MODULE 270

Title: DEVELOPING/PRESENTING A CURRICULUM-BASED EDUCATION PROGRAM*

Recommended pre-requisite: Module 101

PURPOSE

A growing percentage of visitors come to national parks with clearly defined learning objectives. Whether fifth grade class, an Elderhostel program, or a scout group, they desire a ranger-led program on- or off-site to fit into a structured plan for learning. In essence, these visitors have a curriculum. All interpreters must be able to serve the needs of these audiences by integrating their programs with the learner's curriculum. A curriculum-based education program connects the educational objectives of the group with the park's resources through pre- program activities, program, and post-program activities.

A curriculum-based program requires all the elements of a good interpretive program (knowledge of the resource, knowledge of the audience, and appropriate techniques). Because the interpreter has more access to the audience and its curriculum through pre-visit activities, there is greater opportunity to tailor programs to meet specific needs.

Through pre-program contacts the interpreter can lay the foundation for what the group will see and learn and do during the program. This allows the interpreter to use the program time to provide the learners greater personal involvement with the resource. Developmentally appropriate activities and content actively engage learners. Follow-up activities ensure that the learning continues long after the bus pulls away. This process serves the dual needs of both the group and the park/site. It helps the group meet its learning objectives and helps the park meet its primary mission of resource preservation.

Module 270 focuses on the body of knowledge and skills necessary for individuals to develop and present a curriculum-based program for an educational group. These individual programs presentations best fit within an overall park education plan. Skills for developing an education plan, which would include services such as teacher training, self-directed programs, outreach, teaching materials, partnerships, marketing and evaluation will be addressed in higher level competencies for GS-11 and above.

AUDIENCE

All developmental level ranger interpreters, and cooperating association employees and volunteers presenting education programs.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- explain the history and variety of curriculum-based education programs in the NPS and how they

reflect educational trends;

- describe the developmental process and how it affects interpretation, learning styles, and special needs for learners of different ages;
- explain the meaning of curriculum in relation to schools, adult education groups, and youth groups;
- choose the appropriate presentation techniques for the audience, the setting, the subject matter, and the intended learning outcome;
- describe the basic structure of schools and other educational groups and ways to interact with group leaders before and during the programs to provide the best possible experience for students;
- describe and follow a simple process for developing a curriculum-based program for an organized group.

TOPICS

History and role of NPS education programs including Parks as Classrooms; Introduction to Learning and Development; What is Curriculum?; Working With Educational Groups; Presentation Techniques; Developing Your Curriculum-Based Program.

DELIVERY

Classroom, lab, park, cluster, servicewide courses for rangers, universities, NAI, museum education seminars, workshops, professional training organizations, training contractors, Cooperative Park Education Unit at UMASS-Lowell, experiential learning, on-the-job training, mentoring.

BENCHMARK COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT

Prepare and present an effective, curriculum-based education program for an organized group which includes pre-visit and post-visit activities.

COMPONENTS

- History and Role of NPS Education Programs
- What is Curriculum?
- Introduction to Learning and Development
- Working with Educational Groups
- Presentation Techniques
- Developing Your Curriculum-Based Program

TARGET

Within two years of appointment

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<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/270/module.htm>

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