



Tips for Organizing a Successful School or After-School Visit

Interested in making a difference? By spending just a few hours of your time, you can engage a roomful of children in engineering. Your job is interesting, creative, and makes a difference in the world. When you share that with a group of children you help them discover engineering and learn how it touches the world around them.

What does a visit with kids involve?

You can meet with a group of students in their elementary or middle-school classroom or in an after-school program such as Boys & Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, 4-H, or other youth group (see tips below on how to identify a site).

You can visit one time for an hour or 90 minutes, or once a week for several weeks—it's up to you and the teacher or group leader. In a single visit, you can share information about your work, answer questions, and lead students in a fun activity that will give them a chance to think like engineers. If you have more time, you can work with students on ongoing projects, like the Future City competition (www.futurecity.org), or perhaps take a field trip to a local engineering project site.

How do I set up a visit?

Choose a site. If you have children, their schools or clubs are a natural starting point. Identify other local schools and after-school programs by asking friends and coworkers. Your employer may have a relationship with a local school—try asking your Human Resources or Community Relations department, or employee volunteerism council.

Call or send an e-mail to set up the visit. At a school, try to contact the science or technology teacher or department chair, which is more direct than contacting the principal or guidance counselor. At an after-school program, ask for the programs director or group leader. Your visit should be a collaborative effort with the teacher or leader—if possible, arrange to meet face to face before your visit.

If you call, leave a message. Teachers are hard to reach during the day. Consider including your home phone number and appropriate calling hours. If it is convenient for you, you could also leave your e-mail address.

Team up if you'd rather not go alone. Tag along with an engineer who has visited groups before, or team up with someone else who wants to give this a try. Or, suggest to the instructor that you are available for a "technology night" and can run a table of engineering activities with a partner.

What do I say?

Explain that you are interested in visiting the class or program and leading hands-on activities related to engineering. Tell them that you will bring the materials. Set up a date and time for your visit (agree on an arrival time, set-up time, and length of presentation). Also ask:

- What engineering concepts have the children already studied?
- Are there particular topics the teacher would like you to cover?
- Will you have access to technology (LCD projection for your computer, DVD player, internet access, etc.)?
- How old are the children? How many are in the group?
- Are there any children with disabilities that need accommodation, and what is the best way to do this?
- How should you get to the site and where should you park?

How should I prepare?

Order the DiscoverE volunteer kit at www.DiscoverE.org. This kit includes activities, a colorful poster, and more. Next review the *“Leading Kids Through a Successful Engineering Experience”* online workshop. This self-guided tutorial shows you how to prepare and lead an interactive session with students. You can find it in the “Volunteers and Educators” section of www.DiscoverE.org. Some other tips, include:

One week before visit:

- Choose a topic and activities, keeping in mind any requests from the teacher or leader.
- Assemble enough materials for the group.
- Collect any background materials or information for the teacher or leader (e.g., resources developed by local or national engineering societies).
- Consider handouts to distribute or give-aways for the children, such as pens or pencils with your company’s logo, and make sure to pack enough for the group.
- If you are bringing a DVD, your own laptop, or want to stream a video, let the teacher know ahead of time to arrange for the necessary equipment.

Day of visit:

- Wear clothes typical for your job and suitable for leading an activity. You don’t need to dress up if that isn’t your typical work attire. If you work in the field, students will enjoy seeing your outdoor clothes and gear.
- Allow extra time to find the building’s location and the exact room.
- Stay relaxed and keep smiling—this is going to be fun!

Day after visit:

- Evaluate your experience. Write down what worked and didn’t, and why.
- Ask the teacher or group leader for feedback on your session—tell them to visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/DiscoverE_Educators_2014.

Visit www.DiscoverE.org for activities, giveaways, and more!