



## Teaching the Immigrant Guide

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## Overview

### **Description**

This guide includes activity ideas for teaching topics in “What Every Immigrant Needs to Know.” You can apply these ideas to any of the topics that are relevant to your group.

### **Audience**

The activities are designed for English language learners who are comfortable speaking in small groups. You may need to adjust the activities if your audience members are beginning English speakers.

### **Instructor experience**

Instructors should be familiar with the topics in the guide and know how to use the index, table of contents, and resources to find information quickly.

## Materials

The following materials will support your facilitation of the activities.

- **What Every Immigrant Needs to Know:** One guide for each student, and one for yourself
- **Activity Worksheets:** Many activities require you to use supplemental material. You can provide your own material (for example, ads for rental apartments), or you can print activity worksheets.

## Instructor preparation

Take the following steps to prepare to teach the Immigrant Guide.

1. **Review the Guide thoroughly.** Make sure you are familiar with its contents and how it is organized. You should be able to find information quickly and elaborate on topics if students ask questions. You may find that discussion of one topic leads to another topic, and you'll want to be able to direct students to relevant parts of the guide.
2. **Review the suggested activities.** Decide if you want to present them as-is, or customize them for your students. All the topics in the guide are relevant to immigrants at one point or another. You can modify which activities you use to teach a topic, and you can modify which topics you teach.
3. **Decide how you will integrate the Guide into your class.** Be creative. Design a class that works for you and your students. You may decide to spend two consecutive hours on the Guide, or you may opt to spend 10-15 minutes per class, presenting one topic each time the class meets.
4. **Prepare materials for the activities.** Every activity has something for you to do and something for students to do. Read all the steps for the activities and prepare what you will need. You may use current objects, such as a local newspaper to find apartment rentals, or you may print the relevant activity worksheets.

## Lessons

### ***When Should You Call 911? (#1)***

Students learn when to call 911 and practice making 911 calls.

#### **Approach**

- Group or individual discussion using a white board or flip chart to record responses
- Role play activity in pairs to practice making a 911 call

#### **Preparation**

- Create role play cards with a name, address, and a picture of an emergency. Students will use the cards to practice making a 911 call.
- You will need one card for every two students.

#### **Presentation**

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**Discussion**     **Introduce** the topic.

**Brainstorm** situations when a person should call 911.

**Record** responses on the board.

- If anyone brings up a situation that actually does not warrant a 911 call, put it in a different column.
- Review the items in the second column and discuss what they might do instead in that situation. For example, in a poison emergency, call 1-800-222-1222.

**Make sure** all of the common reasons for calling 911 have been mentioned:

- Fire, robbery, accident, etc.

**Ask** students what kind of information they should provide when they call 911:

- Name, location, description of what happened.

**Show** students a phone so they can see where the numbers are.

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**Role play**     **Distribute** the role play cards to groups.

**Call on** one student to pretend to call 911. Act as the 911 operator and respond to the call.

**Give** students two minutes to work in pairs, practicing making a 911 call with the information they have on their cards.

**Call time** after two minutes.

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**Ask** students to swap cards with someone near them, and repeat the activity, switching roles so each person has a chance to practice making the call.

**Have** students practice giving you their own address and be sure they have all of the information needed (apartment number, etc.) and are pronouncing everything clearly.

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**Discussion**     **Emphasize** the seriousness of a 911 call.

- Discuss the importance of teaching their kids about 911, but making sure they don't try it unless it's an actual emergency.
  - Some people may be intimidated to call 911 because of their legal status in this country. Assure them that calling 911 will not put them in danger.
  - Some people may want to know if they can make the call in Spanish. While there are often Spanish speakers available, it's best to be prepared to speak in English just in case.
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**Summary**     **Review** the “When to Call 911” entry in the Guide.

**Ask** students if they have any additional questions.

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## **Discrimination (#8)**

Students learn about laws related to discrimination and discuss their experiences related to discrimination.

### **Approach**

- Large or small group discussion

### **Preparation**

- (Optional) Bring a current events story or a well-known story to share with the group (such as The Story of Rosa Parks, in “Plays for the Holidays”, by Ray Clark).

### **Presentation**

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**Discussion**     **Introduce** the topic.

**Ask** students to raise their hands if they have ever felt discriminated against based on their race, sex, sexual preference, religion, country of origin, etc. (Note, if you have had this experience, you can raise your hand too.)

**Ask** students to share their experiences if they are comfortable. If it’s a big group, you could have everyone tell a partner instead of the whole group.

**Ask** students to discuss any laws against discrimination in their countries.

**Explain** discrimination laws in the U.S.:

- In the U.S, the law states that a person cannot be discriminated against when seeking housing, employment, education, etc.
- If a student feels they have been discriminated against, he or she should contact \_\_\_\_\_(?)

**Ask** people to share their ideas for ending discrimination in our society.

- This could be a group discussion or written homework assignment.

(Optional) **Read** a story that involves discrimination as a basis for discussion.

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**Summary**     **Review** the “Discrimination” entry in the Guide.

**Ask** students if they have any additional questions.

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## **Finding Housing (#29)**

Students discuss how they found their current housing and practice interviewing landlords about an apartment for rent. Students learn how to read abbreviations in ads and where to find listings for housing.

### **Approach**

- Large group discussion
- Practice in pairs

### **Preparation**

- Create newspaper clippings of housing ads from recent newspapers. If you have enough ads, cut them up so you can distribute 2-3 ads for each student. It's okay if some students have the same ads.
- Create Landlord cards: Cut out five ads for housing with different numbers of bedrooms, bathrooms, etc. (You may use the prepared ads in the Activity sheets, or find ads in your local newspaper or online.)
- Create Renter cards: Create five index cards with descriptions of families, one that matches each housing ad. Include the number of people, what they're looking for, their budget, etc. (You may use the prepared descriptions in the Activity sheets, or create descriptions that match the ads you found.)

### **Presentation**

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**Discussion**     **Introduce** the topic.

**Ask** students how they found the home where they currently live.

**Make sure** these options have been mentioned:

- Signs posted in a yard or window
- Classified ads in the newspaper
- Advertisements online
- Referrals from friends and co-workers

**Write** some sample signs on the board and read them together:

- For rent
  - Apartment for rent
  - Apartment available
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**Discussion**     **Distribute** the newspaper clippings of recent housing ads.

**Ask** students to call out two or three abbreviations from the ads.

**Write** the abbreviations on the board and discuss them.

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**Make sure** the following abbreviations are mentioned:

- BR = Bedroom
- BA = Bathroom
- LR = Living room
- FURN = Furnished
- NS = No smoking

**Introduce** these terms and discuss their meaning:

- Utilities: water, heat, electricity
- Lease: essentially the same as rent
- Security deposit: many landlords require renters to pay the equivalent of one month's rent as a deposit. When the renter moves out, if the apartment is in good condition, the landlord returns the deposit. If the apartment is damaged or there is excessive cleaning that needs to be done, the landlord may keep part or all of the deposit.

**Discuss** the fact that sometimes utilities are included in the rent, and sometimes they are not. If they are not included, it's important to find out about how much they will cost per month.

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**Brainstorm** **Brainstorm** questions you might ask if you're calling about an apartment you have seen advertised.

**Write** students' ideas on the board. Students can refer back to these questions during the activity you will do next.

**Make sure** the following questions are written on the board:

- How much is the monthly rent?
- Do you require a security deposit?
- How many bedrooms are there?
- Are utilities included?
- What is the average cost for monthly utilities?
- When is the apartment available?

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**Activity** **Divide** the class into two groups. One group will play the part of landlords with apartments to rent. The other group will play the part of renters.

**Distribute** the five Landlord cards to the landlord group. Distribute the five Renter cards to the renter group.

**Explain** the activity:

- Both groups will read the information on their cards and be prepared to ask or answer questions about them.
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- The renters will interview landlords to find a place to rent. If the first landlord they talk to does not have a suitable place, renters will continue interviewing landlords until they find a match.

**Demonstrate** the activity:

- **Ask** for a volunteer from the landlord group.
- **Say**, “I’m looking for a two bedroom apartment and I can spend as much as \$600 per month. Do you have a place I can rent?”
- The landlord reads the description on the card and answers yes or no.
- **Ask**, “What is the cost of the apartment you have for rent?”
- The landlord answers.
- **Explain** that you will continue in this way until you find a place to rent.

**Ask** if students have any questions about the activity or about what is written on their cards.

**Explain** that students have five minutes to find a place to rent.

**Begin** the activity.

**Call time** after five minutes.

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**Debrief**

**Call on** three or four students to share their experience:

- Did you find a place to rent? (or, did you rent your apartment?)
- What part of the search was easy for you?
- What part of the search was difficult?

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**Demo  
(optional)**

If you have access to a computer in class, demonstrate how to do apartment searches online.

**Visit** the following sites and describe how to narrow the search to a specific location, price, number of bedrooms, etc:

- Craigslist ([www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org))
- Local newspaper websites (include free weekly papers as well as subscription papers)

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**Summary**

**Review** the “Finding Housing” entry in the Guide.

**Ask** students if they have any additional questions.

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## Answering Phones/Checking Messages (#59)

Students learn appropriate etiquette for answering the telephone and leaving messages. Students discuss their experiences in answering the phone and leaving messages.

### Approach

- Group discussion

### Preparation

- Find out whether there are laws in your state or neighboring states related to driving while talking on a cell phone.

### Presentation

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**Discussion**     **Introduce** the topic and brainstorm situations when you may not answer your phone.

- Possible answers: while working, driving, eating dinner, etc. The answer may be different for different people.

**Remind** students that it is illegal in some states to take or make a call while driving. Discuss the laws in your state and neighboring states.

**Discuss** norms related to cell phone use:

- Many people turn the phone off or put it on silent mode when they are working, sleeping, having lunch with a friend, etc.
- It can be considered rude to have your phone ring during a meeting or in the movie theater, for example.

**Ask** students what they do when someone doesn't answer their phone.

- Possible answers: Call back, leave a message, get frustrated, etc.
- For many people in this country, it is normal and expected to leave a voice mail if someone doesn't answer.

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**Activity**     **Write** the following dialogue on the board: *Hi. This is \_\_\_\_\_. My number is \_\_\_\_\_. Please call me back.*

Have students practice this.

- **Make sure** your phone is off or on silent.
- **Give** students your number and have them call and leave you a message.

**Discuss** the importance of checking your messages everyday and returning calls when people leave a message.

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**Summary**     **Review** the “Answering Phones/Checking Messages” entry in the Guide and ask if they have any additional questions.

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## **Postage and the Post Office (#62)**

Students learn how to address an envelope, the different prices for mailing letters and packages, and the process to follow to change addresses or put mail on hold. Students practice addressing an envelope and writing a letter.

### **Approach**

- Group discussion about addressing envelopes, change of address, mail hold, and students' experiences with sending and receiving mail
- Individual activity to address an envelope and write a letter.

### **Preparation**

- Bring in one envelope and one stamp for each student.
- Go to the post office to obtain a change of address form and a mail hold form.

### **Presentation**

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**Discussion**     **Introduce** the topic.

**Draw** an envelope on the board and explain where to put each item:

- Recipient address (including name, street address, city, state, zip)
- Return address
- Stamp

**Discuss** the price of stamps.

- The cost to mail a standard envelope within the U.S. is 44 cents (as of August 2009).
  - The price increases for larger and/or heavier envelopes, mailing letters outside of the U.S., and sending packages.
- 

**Activity**     **Distribute** one envelope and one stamp to each student.

**Ask** students to address the envelope to themselves, making sure they include the required information in the correct location on the envelope.

**Collect** all the envelopes and redistribute them so each student has someone else's envelope.

**Review** the diagram on the board and ask students to make sure the envelope they received has all the required information in the correct place.

**Ask** students to get out a piece of paper and write a short message (in English) to the person whose envelope they have.

**Have** students prepare the envelope for mailing:

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- Insert their letter and seal the envelope
- Write their return address on the envelope
- Put the stamp in the correct place

**Collect** the letters. If possible, go as a group to the post office or blue mailbox to send them. If a group excursion is not possible, put them in the mail after class.

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**Discussion**     **Ask** students how long it takes to receive envelopes and packages from their home country.

**Explain:** In the U.S., it generally takes two to three days for mail to arrive.

**Hand out** the change of address form and mail hold form, if you have them. Ask students to look at the forms and pass them around the class.

**Discuss** the procedure for change of address:

- When you move, you can ask the post office to forward your mail to your new address for up to six months.
- You can get a change of address form at the post office, or you can fill out a form online at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com).
- It is important to notify everyone who sends you mail (friends, credit cards, magazines, etc.) of your new address, since the post office will only forward your mail for six months.

**Discuss** the procedure for putting your mail on hold:

- If you are going to be away for more than a few days, it's a good idea to ask the post office to hold your mail until you return.
- You can get a change of address form at the post office, or you can fill out a form online at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com).
- On the form, you specify the date you are leaving and the date you want to resume mail service.

Discuss P.O. boxes.

- If you move frequently, you may choose to have a post office, or P.O. box, instead of having mail delivered to your house.
- P.O. boxes are located at a post office, and there is a monthly fee. Usually the boxes are in a location that you can access 24 hours a day, even if the post office is not open.

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**Summary**     **Review** the “Postage and the Post Office” entry in the Guide.

**Ask** students if they have any additional questions.

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## **Common Social Taboos (#103)**

Students learn topics of conversation that are generally avoided in the U.S. and gestures that are considered rude. Students share examples from their own culture.

### **Approach**

- Group discussion

### **Preparation**

- Review the lesson on Small Talk and Questions (#110) and consider teaching these two topics together.

### **Presentation**

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**Discussion**     **Introduce** the topic.

**Ask** students what conversation topics are uncomfortable for them.

**Explain** that in the U.S., questions about politics, sexual preference, salary and religion are topics that should be avoided with new people.

**Ask** for a volunteer who is comfortable sharing rude hand and facial gestures from their country or from what they have seen here.

**Demonstrate** some of the key rude gestures that they should be aware of. You may also want to include swear words, and when it's okay and not okay to use them.

**Emphasize** that while it may seem fun to try out new gestures or bad words from a different culture/language, these things have much more meaning for others, and we need to be careful and respectful.

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**Summary**     **Review** the “Common Social Taboos” entry in the Guide.

**Ask** students if they have any additional questions.

**Present** the “Small Talk and Questions” lesson if you have not done so already.

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## Small Talk and Questions (#110)

Student practice making small talk and asking questions.

### Approach

- Group discussion to brainstorm conversation starters and enders
- Work in pairs to practice small talk

### Preparation

- Review the lesson on Common Social Taboos (#103) and consider teaching these two topics together.

### Presentation

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**Discussion**     **Introduce** the topic.

**Brainstorm** questions you can ask to start a conversation and write them to the board.

- Possible answers: Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your family/job. Nice day, isn't it? etc.

**Brainstorm** appropriate responses.

- Possible answers: How interesting. Thanks for asking. And you?

**Brainstorm** appropriate conversation enders.

- Possible answers: It was nice talking with you, will you excuse me? I hope to see you again another time.
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**Activity**     **Ask** students to find a partner.

**Explain** that they will make small talk with different partners over the next four minutes (or whatever length of time seems appropriate for their level), switching partners when you say “change partners.”

**Remind** students that they need to keep talking the entire time.

**Call “change partners”** after two minutes and have students change partners.

**Call “change partners”** after two more minutes and have students change partners again.

**Call time** after four minutes.

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**Debrief**     **Explain** that this sort of light conversation is know as *small talk*, or *chit chat*.

- This is a way to get to know new people or as a way to lead to more meaningful conversation.
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- Questions that are best to avoid with new people may include: religion, politics, and how much money they make.

**Ask** students to share what they learned from the experience.

- What part of making small talk is easy for you?
- What is uncomfortable?

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**Summary**

**Review** the “Small Talk and Questions” entry in the Guide.

**Ask** students if they have any additional questions.

**Present** the “Common Social Taboos” lesson if you have not done so already.

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## **Tipping (#118)**

Students discuss norms for tipping in their home countries and practice calculating appropriate tips for service in the U.S.

### **Approach**

- Group discussion

### **Preparation**

- None

### **Presentation**

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**Discussion**     **Ask** students how much it’s appropriate to tip at restaurants in their countries. Does it vary by the type of restaurant?

**Ask** if anyone knows how much tip is expected in the United States.

**Explain** common practices for tipping in sit-down restaurants in the U.S.:

- When service is good, it is normal to tip 15-20% of the bill.
  - Sometimes when your table has six people or more, the tip is automatically added to the bill. The policy differs depending on the restaurant. Students should check their bill carefully to make sure they are not tipping twice.
  - Gratuity=tip
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**Activity**         **Write** some sample costs on the board.

**Explain** how to move the decimal point over to easily get 10%, and then multiply it by two to get 20%.

**Write** five more amounts on the board and ask students determine a 10% and 20% tip for each.

**Discuss** the results.

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**Discussion**     **Ask** students for ideas about other times to tip.

- Possible answers: hair cuts (10%), taxis (10%)

**Remind** students never to try to tip a police officer or any other government official.

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**Summary**       **Review** the “Tipping” entry in the Guide.

**Ask** students if they have any additional questions.

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## Measurement Conversions (#138)

Students learn how to use conversion charts to determine distance, weight, and temperature. Students practice measuring distances and converting values to the U.S. system.

### Approach

- Group discussion
- Activity to practice measuring distances and converting values

### Preparation

- Bring in conversion charts for each student for feet/meters, pounds/grams, and Celsius/Fahrenheit. You can find these online or use the Activity sheets.
- Bring in two or three tape measures for students to measure themselves.
- (Optional) Bring in copies of a recipe and have students convert measurements from the metric system to the U.S. system.

### Presentation

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**Discussion**     **Introduce** the topic.

**Ask** students if they use meters/kilometers or feet/miles to measure distances. Most people who are not from the U.S. are probably used to using meters/kilometers.

**Ask** students to share any tricks they use to help them convert values for measurement.

**Discuss** two examples:

- Three feet = approximately one meter.
- To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius, take 30 away from the Fahrenheit, and divide the answer by two to get the value in Celsius.

**Hand out** conversion charts and discuss equivalent values:

- 1 foot = 0.3 meters
  - 3 feet = 1 yard = .9144 meters
  - 5280 feet = 1 mile = 1.6 kilometers
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**Activity**     **Using** the chart to help them, ask them how far (in miles) they live from various places.

**Ask** students figure out how tall they are in feet/inches. Ask them to remember their height. Show them how to write it (5'8").

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**Activity**     **Show** students a conversion chart of pounds vs. kilograms.

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**Ask** them to figure out how much they weigh in pounds. (They do not need to share their answers.)

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**Activity**

**Show** students a conversion chart of Celsius and Fahrenheit.

**Ask** them what the normal temperature is in Fahrenheit in their countries at this time of year.

**Ask** them what the normal temperature is here at various times of the year (Fahrenheit.)

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**Activity  
(optional)**

You may also consider doing a class baking project or create a recipe book to provide practice with cups, tablespoons, etc.

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**Summary**

**Review** the “topic” entry in the Guide.

**Ask** students if they have any additional questions.

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## **Public Libraries (#144)**

Students discuss the rules for obtaining a library card and checking out books. Class tours the local library and checks out books.

### **Approach**

- Group discussion
- Field trip to the library

### **Preparation**

- Organize a tour of the local library. Ask the librarian what students will need in order to get a card (usually a bill to verify their address.) Arrange to see the children's section, foreign language section, computers, audio visual collection, and more.

### **Presentation**

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**Discussion**    **Ask** students where they get books in their country.

**Ask** them who has a library card or has been to the local library.

**Ask** them to share what they know about the following topics:

- How to get a library card
- Expected behavior in the library
- Requirements for care of library materials
- Rules for how many materials you can check out, and for how long (different requirements for books, new arrivals, videos, music, etc.)
- Consequences for returning materials late

**Brainstorm** other information students would like to ask a librarian.

**Explain** how to get to the library.

- Specific driving directions
  - Public transportation
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**Field trip**    **Bring** students to the library or meet them there at a designated time.

**Have** students ask the librarian the questions that the class created.

**Participate** in the tour, making sure students get answers to their questions.

**Help** students fill out forms to obtain a library card and locate materials to check out.

**Make sure** students know when their materials are due, and where to return them.

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**Debrief**      **Review** the information students learned, making sure to note the following:

- How to get to the library
- Fines associated with late return of materials

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**Summary**      **Review** the “Public Libraries” entry in the Guide.

**Ask** students if they have any additional questions.

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