

Guided Sessions: Benefits and Practicalities

By Paula Briggs



Guided sessions can provide an invaluable way to pass on knowledge and open minds, whether you are working with a small or large group, or even whole class. AccessArt has been using guided sessions as warm-ups very successfully for many years, with children from as young as 5, through to adults and teachers CPD.

This short resource explains how you might run a guided session, and what kinds of themes work best.

• What is a Guided Session?

A guided session is a session in which the facilitator or

teacher talks pupils or students through a process or area of exploration, whilst they undertake that exploration. The whole group works at the same pace, led by the facilitator. Guided sessions require that the students and pupils work quietly (so they can hear the facilitator), and that the facilitator takes an active, verbal role throughout the session.

Guided sessions are usually brief but intense, usually lasting 5 to 15 minutes.

▪ **What are the Benefits of Running a Guided Session?**

Guided sessions can:

- Help establish a shared experience
- Help open minds to new ideas, techniques and materials
- Enable the whole group make similar progress by creating a sense of pace (more hesitant students are encouraged onwards and there is little time for lack of confidence to get in the way)
- Help share the responsibility of making art (i.e. the facilitator takes some of the weight away from the pupils/students by verbalising the process as the student undertakes the process)
- Create a body of work for reflection
- Prepare the group towards the next step
- Enable the facilitator to better understand the ability/understanding of pupils/students

▪ **What Kinds of Activities are Suited to Guided Sessions**

Guided sessions work best when used during activities which focus upon an exploration of media, or an exploration of a particular approach. For example:

- An exploration of a particular media, such as watercolour, charcoal or pencil
- An exploration of a particular way of working, for example, making drawings inspired by sound

Guided sessions work well when used as the very first introduction to a material, but equally they can be used to create a sense of community with more experienced students.

▪ **How to Set Up a Guided Session**

Guided sessions require that the students or pupils are quiet and settled, so make sure each student has everything they need before the session starts. Avoid students moving around the room and disrupting the session by having all materials by each student. This might include:

- Paper
- Drawing materials
- Subject matter (if you are doing any kind of observational drawing)

Think about how the room is set up. If you are using desks, you might consider moving them so as to create a circle and enable all students to face inwards. However you set up the room, make sure all students will be able to hear the facilitator.

▪ **The Role of the Facilitator**

During a guided session the facilitator should try to:

- Be clear about the aims of the session and set expectations
- Be clear about the structure of the session (have notes in front of you as you talk)
- Sound confident and enthusiastic (the voice of the facilitator is key to a guided session)

- Keep focussed
- Be encouraging (intersperse your monologue with comments directed at pupils)
- Keep to a timeframe: allow enough time for students to try each activity whilst also maintaining a pace so there is no hanging about or waiting.

▪ **What Happens after a Guided Session?**

Always allow time after a guided session, and ideally before the follow on session, to look at the work produced and reflect upon it as a group.

▪ **Examples of Guided Session Activities**

See the examples below.

To Colour...

As part of Sensory Spaces: An Autism Friendly Project, artist, Sarah Evelyn Marsh ran two sessions exploring the theme of colour. What does colour smell like? What does colour feel like?

The AccessArt Village and How

a Small Idea can be Big

Sheila Ceccarelli from AccessArt leads year nine students from Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls on a collective drawing and collage experience exploring the #AccessArtVillage in BRG Brentwood Road Gallery. Students absorb this stunning collection of sewn houses and inspired by thread and stitches, make their own creative responses.

Day of the Dead Skulls

This workshop combined students' studies of the skull with ideas borrowed from the Mexican traditions for Dia de Muertos – The Day of the Dead.

One Material: Sea Sculptures from Plastic Bottles

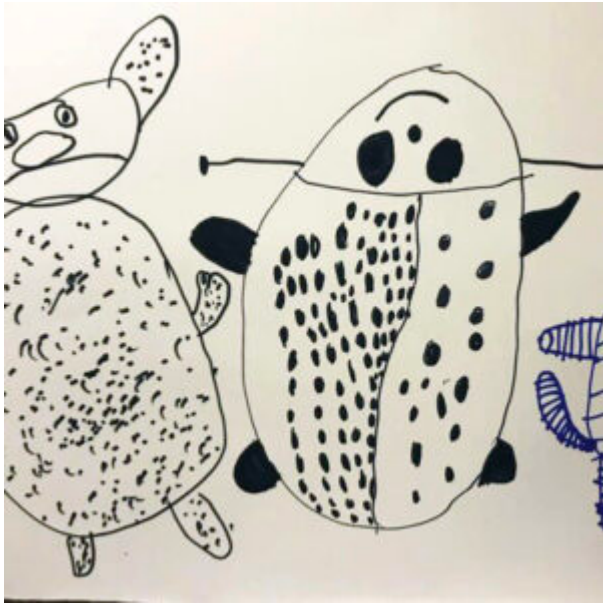
Exploring the Sculptural Possibilities of Plastic Milk

Bottles

**Drawing Soft Toys Inspired by
“Where the Wild Things Are”
by Maurice Sendak**

**See This Resource Used In
Schools...**







You May Also Like...

Pathway: Drawing and Making Inspired by Maurice Sendak



[This resource is featured in the 'Drawing and Making Inspired by Maurice Sendak' pathway](#)

Visual Arts Planning Collections: Toys, puppets, dolls



talking points: maurice sendak



Working with Ink

In this one hour session, led by artist Melissa Pierce Murray, students explore techniques and properties of Quink and Black India Inks, and how to build up a drawing using the medium.

Magnets and Forces

Secondary school students are likely to study properties of magnets in their science classes, but in this workshop, artist Melissa Pierce Murray, encourages teenagers to explore playful and aesthetic responses to magnets, rather than analytic and quantifiable ones. Using artistic and scientific approaches together aid in developing curiosity and imagination.

Two and Four Legged Creatures

Two and Four Legged Creatures with oil based clay over a simple wire armature to make delicate, extended structures. A one hour, artist led session with Melissa Murray.

The Opposite of Light

Teenagers work with artist Melissa Pierce Murray on a range of explorations looking at light and contrasts. This workshop

explores contemporary themes around placement, object and meaning.

Snowflakes

Artist Melissa Pierce Murray leads teenagers in a festive workshop exploring snowflakes and decorating Christmas cookies with piping and egg tempura.

Making your Mark on Small Canvases

Making a “To Scale” Gallery

This resource shares the process by which 6 twelve year old children created a shared architectural model working in foamboard, working alongside Paula Briggs. The model was based upon an existing house, which was measured and scaled down.

Installing Artwork in “To Scale” Gallery

Draw, Paint, Build, Make: Gallery Project

Sensory Spaces: An Autism-Friendly Project

To Connect



At the beginning of the project it was important to take time getting used to each other, the learning space and the surrounding environment. Below is a list of considerations you may find helpful to use in your own learning spaces. Be aware of the daily sounds, smells and other textures of life in your learning space; a constant humming noise or flickering light may be stressful for a child with autism. Allow time for everyone to feel their way in the space; connections may be made through the use of different senses and body parts.

To Conceal



During the six week project, the group explored different themes and actions, some of these were displayed through learning schemas. In week 2 we experimented with different ways to conceal ourselves and objects; schemas such as enveloping and enclosure were exhibited by the group.

To Colour



Two of the sessions explored the theme of colour. The first was rather abstract, I asked questions such as; What does colour smell like? What does colour feel like?

For a child on the autistic spectrum, a question like this may be confusing, some autistic people think and understand literally. So instead of directing these questions at the children, I answered and speculated on them myself. These abstract questions became vehicles for the workshops documented below.

To Construct



In my final post on the project, I want to reflect on the theme of To Construct... looking at the different ways we constructed during the project. Please remember this is a personal and artistic reflection, based on the ideas I presented and the (emotional and physical) reactions and responses of the children and their families, who inspired changes and the development of the project as we experienced it.

To Conceal....

You May Also Like...

Talking Points: Linda BELL



[Explore how Linda Bell creates sculptures](#)

Talking Points: Nnena Kalu



[Explore artist Nnena Kalu](#)

Composite Still Life Studies in Candlelight

The Winter Tree Challenge: A Combined Sculpture & Drawing Project!

This post shares an hour long session at the AccessArt Art Lab, in which the young teenagers (12 and 13 years) worked on two projects simultaneously: a shared winter forest drawing in charcoal, and a sculpture challenge to make a winter tree. The time and material constraints resulted in an energetic and inventive session. By Paula Briggs