

At this kids' museum, please touch!

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The Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Photo by: David Karas

More and more museums are encouraging people to play. Their exhibits have objects people can touch.

This was not always true. Museums are sometimes seen as places to be quiet. Kids are told to look but not touch. The museum does not want anyone hurting fragile artifacts.

That way of thinking is changing.

It began mostly with children's museums.

The Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is an example.

On a Friday afternoon, kids here are building castles. These are made from large foam blocks. Other kids are climbing in an empty city bus. It becomes a playground.

Some kids are enjoying a play grocery store. Visitors there can fill their carts with items. They even go through the check-out process.

Patricia Wellenbach is in charge of the Please Touch Museum.

Wellenbach says the exhibits encourage learning at different ages.

Kids Can Learn Through Touch And Feel

For years, museums have looked for ways to excite kids. They often have interactive exhibits. Kids can learn here through touch and feel. Museums want kids to learn about artifacts that interest them.

However, this is not just for kids anymore, Wellenbach and others say. More museums want hands-on experiences for everyone.

Laura Lott leads a museum group. She says we live in a digital world. We see things on our phone. We see things on a computer. Lott believes physically feeling something is important.

At some museums, there are objects we cannot touch. They are too fragile or valuable. Dinosaur bones are an example.

Some museums are finding ways around this, Lott says. She notes that some museums use computers. They can scan fragile artifacts. Then, they create a copy of the artifact. This copy can be touched. This way visitors can understand what the objects might look and feel like.

Special Gloves

Other museums actually allow visitors to handle fragile artifacts. They just have to wear special gloves. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums is an example. A museum helper watches as they do this.

Play helps kids' brains grow and develop, says Lott. Children's museums understood this early.

Tomoko Kuta works at The New Children's Museum in San Diego, California. She works with artists. They build artwork that encourages physical interaction.

Play is a way, Kuta says, to learn lifelong skills. Some examples are creativity, problem solving and how to work with others.

Many classrooms cannot allow such play. Museums can, Kuta says.

Quiz

- 1 Which question is answered in the section "Special Gloves"?
- (A) How many museums ask visitors to use special gloves?
 - (B) When did classrooms stop allowing children to play?
 - (C) What kinds of lifelong skills can children learn by playing?
 - (D) Which artists made art for The New Children's Museum?
- 2 Which sentence from the introduction [paragraphs 1-9] explains WHY kids are only allowed to look at some museums?
- (A) More and more museums are encouraging people to play.
 - (B) Their exhibits have objects people can touch.
 - (C) The museum does not want anyone hurting fragile artifacts.
 - (D) Wellenbach says the exhibits encourage learning at different ages.
- 3 Which sentence from the article states a MAIN idea of the entire article?
- (A) Museums are sometimes seen as places to be quiet.
 - (B) Patricia Wellenbach is in charge of the Please Touch Museum.
 - (C) Museums want children to learn about artifacts that interest them.
 - (D) More museums want hands-on experiences for everyone.
- 4 Read the paragraph below from the section "Kids Can Learn Through Touch And Feel."

Some museums are finding ways around this, Lott says. She notes that some museums use computers. They can scan fragile artifacts. Then, they create a copy of the artifact. This copy can be touched. This way visitors can understand what the objects might look and feel like.

What is the MAIN idea of this paragraph?

- (A) Some museums have fragile artifacts that cannot be touched.
- (B) Some museums are letting visitors touch copies of fragile artifacts.
- (C) Lott thinks that people spend a lot of time on computers and phones.
- (D) Lott thinks that it is important to hold something in your hands.