



Education

Panel Organizers

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Speakers

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Zoos today are focused on educating the public, and keepers are often the ones interacting most with zoo visitors. If we want to encourage conservation efforts and create people who care, we need to understand how people learn.

We learn through other people. Learning is social—particularly when we're able to learn with someone who's better at something than we are. Learning is:

- Very personal
- Social
- Set in a physical context (the place learning happens can affect how we learn—what does your place of learning communicate unintentionally?)
- An active process (if not allowed to be active, people describe it as unpleasant)

Keeper talks are an extremely important, effective way to engage visitors. Some keepers complain that visitors always ask the same questions—about age, height, weight, diet, and so on—and have no interest in conservation. Go ahead and answer their questions, but then move on to integrate that information into the new information you want to pass along.

How do you actively involve visitors at the zoo?

- Ask good questions.
- Make them think.
- Connect new information to information they already know.
- Start from where the visitors are, and build from there—we don't have to tell them everything we know.