OUR VISIT TO GREAT EXPLORATIONS
What is Great Explorations?

Great Explorations is a children’s museum. Children can go with their families or on field trips from school.

We can play, make things, pretend and learn. This story is for us to learn about all the fun things to do at Great Explorations, and some of the rules we will follow so everybody can enjoy the visit.
Notes for parents, teachers and caregivers

Please stay with your children at all times. The staff at Great Explorations are always monitoring for safety, but they are not able to shadow individual children who have become separated from adults.

WAITING & SHARING – Several exhibits have items, such as costumes or equipment, that children love to play with, and may be reluctant to give up. In these areas, children may need to be prepared for limited playtime or a wait for some more popular items. You will see these symbols on pages where this is more likely to occur.

AGE REQUIREMENTS – Some areas of the museum are only for children ages 5 and under. Older children may need to be prepared to play in a different area.

VISUAL & AUDITORY - If you are coming with a child who has unique sensory or communication needs, please feel free to let the staff at Great Explorations know how they can be of assistance. Knowing the needs of your child will help everyone have a more successful visit.

• If your child is sensitive to PA systems, please be aware that announcements are made to announce programs and demonstrations and also 30 minutes and 15 minutes prior to closing time.
• The Touch Tunnel experience is in total darkness. If a child may find that frightening, it might not be the best activity for that child.

TOUCHING – Almost everything at Great Explorations is OK to touch. For the rare situations where touching is not allowed, you will see this symbol next to a photo of an item that is not OK to touch.

Touch Tunnel hours are posted daily, depending on staff availability to monitor the tunnel. You may want to be sure children know ahead of time that the tunnel may or may not be open during your visit.

Items in the museum are changed frequently. Some items a child enjoys on one visit may be “resting” on the next. There are always new things available to play with.
Where is the door?

As we go from the parking lot toward the big building, we can look for clues to where the entrance is. There may be signs in the parking lot, and signs on some doors.
Which way do we go?

When we enter the lobby, we will see a desk. This desk is for information and for tickets to Sunken Gardens. We will go to the left to the gift shop where we will buy our tickets to Great Explorations.
Where are the restrooms?

If I need to go to the restroom during our visit, I will go with an adult from my family or from our group, back to the lobby and follow the sign.
RULE ALERT

Sometimes we will see signs that tell us about rules at Great Explorations. If we follow the rules, it will keep everybody safe, and keep the Museum nice and clean for us and other visitors.
Touching things

It is **OK** to touch almost everything at Great Explorations.

If it is **not OK** to touch something, I will see this symbol on a page of this story.
If I need help

If I need help, or get lost, or have a question, I can ask any of the people who wear an orange Great Explorations shirt like this one.

They will be happy to help me!
Getting my sticker

Maybe we will pay for admission at this counter in the gift shop. I will get a sticker to put on my clothing. If I do not want the sticker on the front of my clothes, I can put it on the back. It is OK.

Maybe I will have to wait a few minutes in line to get my sticker. There are lots of fun things to look at while I wait. I can even play with some of them if I want to. I will be gentle because they must not be broken.
Entering the Museum

When we have our stickers, we will go out the door from the gift shop.

If we are on a field trip, museum staff will ask us to go in these doors instead.
Tables with things to play with. These things change. Sometimes things I played with before will be gone, so I can play with new things.

Giant building blocks. We can build but no climbing!

Treehouse and slide. We will go one at a time on the slide. It goes very fast.
Reefscape

Everything in this exhibit has been made from fabric or yarn.

We will not touch anything behind the fence.
Create Your Own Reefscape

It is OK to touch the crocheted items in this bin.
Sound pipes

We can use the paddles to make different musical sounds on the pipes.
We can make pictures and other kinds of art in the Express Yourself Art Studio.
What Can You Create?

We can take home our drawings or hang them up for others to see.

The only thing we cannot touch in this area is the sign that says CREATE and other peoples’ artwork. Everything else is OK!

If I choose to hang my art up, it will probably be gone the next time we come. If I want to keep the art I make at this table, I will take it home with me today.
Weaving, magnets, and clay

Maybe I will enjoy learning about weaving, creating things with magnets, or using the real artist’s clay to make a sculpture.
My First Market is just like a real grocery store, with pretend food. We can take turns with shopping carts, or we can use a green carrying basket to gather groceries. We can take turns at the cash register checking out customers. We may also need to take turns using the aprons. When we are done playing, we can have fun putting our groceries back on the shelves so that other children can play there.
In the pizza kitchen we can create our own pretend pizza, with whatever toppings we like. We can also make a picture of a pizza on the iPad. We can take turns. This iPad is not for playing games. It is only to make a pretend pizza. Sometimes there might be a video playing on the TV screen and sometimes the TV screen may be off.
This is a pretend oven. It has a light to make it look hot. But it is not hot. I can pretend to cook my pizza here.
On the main stage we can see shows with music and dance as well as science shows about chemistry, sound, and electricity. Maybe we will choose to dress up and put on our own show! We will share costumes and take turns if another child is using one we want to wear.
Resource Center

This is an area for adults to sit and rest for a few minutes. There are brochures and papers with information they can read while they are resting. I should make sure to stay where my adult can see me if I decide not to sit and rest.
Touch Tunnel is open sometimes. We will look at the hours to see if it is open during our visit. We will walk down a hallway to go to Touch Tunnel and Critter Cave. Touch Tunnel is very dark. We will crawl through and touch different things. If we get scared, we can go with an adult, or we can come out.
We can look through the glass windows and see live snakes, lizards, spiders and other creatures. The animals don’t like loud noises, so we should keep our hands off the glass and use indoor voices.
Pet Vet

We will learn how to take care of pets and keep them healthy. We can use microscopes to look at fish scales and feathers, and use the grooming table with working blow dryer. We can look at x-rays. We can share and take turns wearing the vet coats.

We will see a lot of animals in the Pet Vet area. They are all toys. They are not real dogs or cats.
Bernoulli Table

Push the START button and watch the balls float in the air. I will hear a noise when I push the button and that is OK. The noise will stop by itself. I can push it again or decide to play somewhere else.
We will learn about having a fire safety plan at home and how to stay safe in a fire. Maybe we will need to take turns on the equipment and share the firefighter costumes. I can wait a few minutes - it will be my turn soon.

The fire engine lights flash, and it makes a lot of noise!
Firefighter Wii Game

We can play a firefighter game on the Wii.
Maybe we will have to wait to use the game, or maybe we will not have to wait.
If there are other children waiting, we can play a few minutes then let someone else have a turn.
I can read a news story and see what I might look like if I were a news person on TV. I can take turns being on TV with other children so everybody can see themselves on TV!

We can share the costume. I can wear it for a few minutes, then it will be someone else’s turn.

We can go in the hurricane simulator to feel the strong wind. It is very loud when the simulator is on. It will cost extra money. If we cannot do this on our visit this time, maybe we will another day.
We can use blocks, Legos and other things to build anything we want. The blocks will stay at the Museum after we are all done. Next time I come, I will not see what I made last time. Maybe we can take a picture of what I make so I can remember!
Fish wall

Did you know fish make sounds? Touch a fish and hear a sound.
Belle the cow

I can milk the cow. I will not see real milk, I will see water, but it is fun to pretend! The sign says: “PLEASE DON’T SIT ON BELLE THE COW”
Great Beginnings

This area is only for children who are 5 and under. If I am older than 5, I can play in another area.

I can wear costumes and play with blocks and farm food toys. I can share costumes with other children. We will take turns!

Put the ball in here

It comes out here

Close the gate and clean our hands!
Beth’s Beach

I can take off my shoes before I play in this area. I will put them back on before I play in another area.

I can play in the beach sand and learn about creatures that live in the ocean! This beach does not have real sand.
We can take the stairs. If it is not possible to take the stairs, we can ride the elevator.
Fit4AllKidsVille

We can visit a café and a doctor’s office. We will play games to learn about healthy eating. In the doctor’s office, we will learn all the things that we might do when we go see our doctor. We can share and take turns with costumes and equipment. We will not have real food or a real doctor visit here.
In this area we can balance, climb, dance, do sit ups, and learn many ways to get exercise so we can stay healthy. Maybe I will need to wait until it is my turn.

Balance on the buttons.

Climb the climbing wall.

Dance Dance Revolution!

How fast is my heart beating?

Do sit ups.

Reach and step from butterfly to butterfly.
Preschool

Great Explorations also has a preschool. Some parts of the museum are just for the children from the preschool.

This gate on the 2nd floor is only for children and adults from the preschool. There are no Museum activities in this area.

These are not costumes! This area on the 1st floor is where the guests can keep their coats and sweaters.
Time to Go

When we are all done, it will be time to go. If we are on a field trip, museum staff will help us go out the exit doors. If we are not on a field trip, we will walk through the gift shop to leave the museum. If we cannot stop in the gift shop this time, maybe we will do it another day.

Bye, Great Explorations!

See you next time!
Created for Great Explorations
by
The University of South Florida
Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
1-800-333-4530
813-974-2532
http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu