

SECTION 1**Working as a tour guide****Reading****How to be a good guide**

- 1** What does a tour guide have to do? What does the job involve?
Make two lists.
 - a the things a guide must do/is responsible for
 - b the personal and professional qualities neededCompare your lists with another pair.
- 2** Jenny Townsend is a London 'Blue Badge' guide. Read the text on the next page. It gives Jenny's view of what the job involves and what people expect from a tour guide. Does she mention any of the things you listed? Add the extra items to your lists.
- 3** Read the text again and find words that match the following definitions.
 - a working for oneself, not for a particular company
 - b a description of action and moving events
 - c silly, not serious
 - d easy to talk to and ask questions of
 - e a planned travel route
 - f a person representing his or her country
 - g feeling tired and unwell as a result of air travel
 - h immediate medical help (after an accident, etc.)
 - i to advertise and publicize
 - j careful and skilful management of people and their problems
 - k treating someone like a child
 - l a very important person

Most guides are freelance and are hired for particular jobs. Tour operators and other people employ guides mainly to inform tourists about the places they are visiting. Therefore a guide has to have a good sound knowledge not only of a particular place but also of other things which are generally relevant – for example, architecture, history, and local customs. During our training we intensively learn a vast amount of information about a whole range of subjects, and we have to be capable of jumping from one topic to another in the

Questions can vary. They can be practical ones; it's important to know where the toilets are situated as well as the date of a monument! When things go wrong – as they occasionally do – a guide should pause and calmly sort out the problem, and try to make sure that the original itinerary is kept to.

As a guide you really are an ambassador for your country and it is your job to promote it. For many people you are the only person from that country that they have any contact with. As an ambassador you also have to know about diplomacy and you are responsible for making sure everyone is happy.

You also have to be 'the boss' in order to ensure that the itinerary runs smoothly. You're often in charge of checking in and out of hotels, taking care of baggage, money, and so on. Efficiency is very important in all of this.

Above all as a guide you have to like people. You meet the world in this job, some great people and some awful ones, but you have to try to treat them all as equals. Don't be patronizing, but welcome everyone as if they were a VIP to your country. But most of all, enjoy it!

How to be a Good Guide

same sentence! But the way in which a person conveys this knowledge is the key: you have to be good at judging what your audience is interested in and you have to know how to keep their attention. These are not easy skills, I can tell you!

A guide's commentary should be interesting, lively, and above all, enthusiastic. It shouldn't be too academic and 'heavy', but neither should it be frivolous. A sense of humour is also important, but again one should only be humorous where appropriate. 'Getting the balance right' is the main skill of guiding and commentaries should vary according to each group. A group of schoolchildren and a group of architects require a very different approach.

So you want to be a tour guide? Although I work mainly in London and England I'm sure the job's more or less the same wherever you do your guiding. So let me give you some advice ...

A guide takes on a number of roles for the tourist: teacher, entertainer, ambassador, nurse, and 'the boss'. As 'teacher' the guide is passing on information, as we've discussed. Most tour groups are on holiday so they want to enjoy themselves and want to be

Tourists ask a lot of questions and a guide should be friendly, helpful, and approachable. Guides shouldn't claim to know everything – we're not superhuman! If you don't know the answer, say so, but add 'I'll find out for you'.

entertained to a certain extent. People also need looking after, so you sometimes have to be a nurse. Some people are jet-lagged or have minor illnesses (sometimes worse!). When we train, we do a basic first-aid course.

