



FAMILY GUIDE

A free opportunity to explore science with your child at New York City's zoos, museums, botanical gardens, and aquarium.

Contents

Urban Advantage at a Glance 02

What is Urban Advantage?

8 UA Institutions

What can I do at each institution?

Visiting Urban Advantage Institutions 03

How to visit for free?

Special Family Events

Family Interactions at Exhibits 04

General tips for families

Examples of activities

Inquiry Questions 05

Inquiry questions for exhibit exploration

How Can I Support my Child's Science Education? 06

At home and at school

Visiting UA Institutions

2

What is Urban Advantage?

Urban Advantage is a citywide program that supports science education. Urban Advantage connects schools, teachers, students, and families with the excitement of science discovery and the learning that takes place in eight of NYC's renowned science-rich cultural institutions.

In addition to offering free admission for students and families, Urban Advantage prepares science teachers to use the resources of NYC's science-rich museums, zoos, botanical gardens, and the aquarium to enrich teaching and learning, and provides participating schools with equipment and supplies to help the learning process, both in the classroom and at home.

The 8 Urban Advantage partner institutions

What can I do at each UA Institution?

New York's world-class cultural institutions are great places to visit, enjoy, and do science! UA partner institutions are located in each borough!



Visiting UA Institutions

How to visit for free?

- Students whose science teacher is part of Urban Advantage will receive a **Student +3 voucher**, either digitally or printed. This reusable voucher will admit the student and up to three guests. One of the guests must be an adult.
 - Check out the UA Website: www.urbanadvantagenyc.org and click on Student and Families. Check out the “Visit Institution” tab and see instructions on how to redeem your voucher at each institution.
- Urban Advantage schools can organize a family field trip using a **School Community Trip voucher** to any of the partner institutions on a weekend or a school holiday. These are free trips that encourage family engagement and are organized by the parent coordinator. Reach out to them for more information.
- Family Science Day and the Expo flyers will grant UA student and families free admission to these family events.

Urban Advantage Special Family Events



Family Science Days are special days when our partner institutions open their doors to welcome Urban Advantage families to explore their exhibits and hands-on science activities. Family Science Days take place throughout the school year. You need a special flyer to receive free admission. Reach out to your parent coordinator or UA science teacher for more information.



Urban Advantage Science Expo showcases and celebrates student science and engineering interests and endeavors. Elementary and Middle School students join us to present their work from schools across the city. We welcome families, school staff, students, and community based organizations to this event.

Family Interaction at Exhibits

4

General Tips for Families

- Keep it simple! Asking a few questions and/or sharing a few things at an exhibit is fine
 - Explain what you see.
 - Take turns share your questions and observation with your children as they share theirs.
- Leave time for children to quietly explore the exhibit. You don't have to be constantly engaging them with information or questions.
- If you have more than one child, think about each child's specific needs and how they may learn best.
- When exploring an institution, focus on just a few exhibits. Spending more time at a few exhibits leads to more meaningful interaction and learning.



What Activities Can I Do?

- Scavenger Hunts- Have children search for images, objects or information in an exhibit. It can be as complex as finding an adaptation on a plant or animal or as simple as finding a color or shape!
- Journaling- Let children record or draw their questions and/or observations in a journal. Be as detailed as possible.
- Do creative projects- Use an exhibit to inspire drawing a picture, writing a poem or some other artistic expression.
- Pop Culture- Connect the exhibit to your children's favorite song, book, music, or movie.
- Share Stories!- Talk to your children about how you and your family connect with the exhibit!
 - Did you see these plants/ animals/ objects growing up?
 - Did you see interesting plants/ animals/objects around your home?
 - What is something new you each learned today?

Inquiry Questions for Exhibit Exploration

5

These prompts are designed to help families engage more deeply with institution exhibits. Inquiry-based questions encourage children and adults to observe carefully, make personal connections, and think creatively. By exploring exhibits through open-ended conversation, families strengthen curiosity, critical thinking, and shared learning—all while having fun together.

Observation & Discovery

- What's the very first thing you notice?
- What are some observations you can make?
- What questions or wonderings come to mind?

Making Connections

- Does this remind you of something in your own life?
- What past experiences/things are you reminded of?
- How do you think this connects to today's world?

Exploring Perspectives

- If this object/living thing could talk, what would it say?
- How would this look or feel if it were made today instead of in the past?
- How would you explain this exhibit to a friend who can't see it?

Problem-Solving & Imagination

- How do you think this was made or discovered?
- If you could redesign it, what would you change?
- What characteristic or adaptation would you change of this living thing?

Emotional Engagement

- How does this make you feel?
- If this object/ living thing had a mood, what would it be?
- Does this object/ living thing make you curious, confused, or inspired?

Family Dialogue

- Do we all see the same thing here, or something different?
- If you could ask the curator, zoo keeper or horticulturist one question, what would it be?

How Can I Support My Child's Science Education?

At Home	At School
• Encourage your child to observe, ask questions, and experiment to further their understanding of science. • Provide frequent opportunities for science learning at home and in the community through outdoor play and trips to science-rich sites in your community, such as local parks and cultural institutions. • Take your child to the library for reading and science research. • Use your Student+3 voucher to plan visits to UA institutions based on your child's interest.	• Communicate regularly with your child and their teacher. • Attend family school events, such as family science nights. You might even see a UA partner with a fun hands on activity! • Check with your child's science teacher and parent coordinator about opportunities for upcoming trips to any of our partner institutions. • Encourage your child to work on a science project and showcase it at our annual Urban Advantage Expo!



For institution specific
information in how to use
Student+3 Voucher:
[www.urbanadvantagenyc.org/stu
dents-institutions/](http://www.urbanadvantagenyc.org/students-institutions/)

**American Museum
of Natural History**



The Council of the
City of New York

Public support for the Urban Advantage program is provided by the Speaker and Council of the City of New York, and the New York Public Schools.