Tips for Leading Hands-On Activities

**Greet your guests**
Say “hello,” make eye contact, and smile. People will come over if you look welcoming, available, and friendly. As much as possible, let your guests do the hands-on parts of the activity, and let them discover what happens. (If your activity has a surprise, don’t give it away!)

**Encourage exploration**
Provide positive feedback and assistance when people need it, but let them experiment and learn for themselves. Don’t insist people do things the “right” way—sometimes learning how something doesn’t work is just as valuable as learning how it does work.

**Ask open-ended questions**
Help people observe and think about the activity. Try to use questions that have more than one answer, such as: “What do you see happening?”, “Why do you think that happened?”, “What surprised you about what you saw?”, and “Does this remind you of anything you’ve seen before?”

**Be a good listener**
Be interested in what your guests tell you, and let their curiosity and responses drive your conversation forward.

**Share what you know**
Use clear, simple language. Focus on one main idea—you don’t need to explain everything at once! Start with very basic information, and then share more with interested learners.

**Use examples from everyday life**
Familiar examples can help explain abstract concepts. Be aware of different abilities, keeping in mind that children do not have the same skills or vocabulary as adults.

**Offer positive responses**
If people haven’t quite grasped a concept, you might say, “That’s a good guess!” or, “Very close, any other ideas?” Don’t say, “No” or “Wrong.” You can offer hints or suggestions for things to think about or watch carefully.

**Share accurate information**
If you aren’t sure about something, it’s OK to say, “I don’t know. That’s a great question!” Suggest ways that people can learn more, either by trying another activity or looking up information at the library or online.

**Remain positive**
Maintain an inviting facial expression, positive tone, and open body language throughout the interaction.

**Thank your guests**
As your interaction ends, suggest other activities that you think your guests might enjoy.

**Have fun!**
A positive experience will encourage learning.