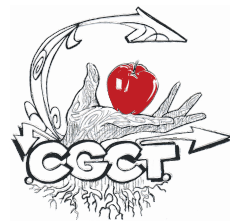


# Grassroots Community Tours

## Writing Tips for Your Tour-Site Summaries



Once you've decided on the tour's sites (half covering historic locations and half covering locations important to youth and community members today), conducted research, and generated a framing of the story you want to tell, the writing process can begin. The following tips should be helpful in that process.

### 1. Figure out **the general story/theme** that weaves all the sites in the tour together.

Your tour will highlight local sites with a particular struggle or special story to tell. If the sites are looked at separately, tour-takers may not get the bigger story/theme you're trying to tell about that community. What is the story to be told? What brings it all together? Here are a few questions that may help you identify the community story/theme. *What has this neighborhood meant to people? What struggles for justice, dignity, and community upliftment have people here fought? What is special about this community?* Keep it short and sweet - then it will be powerful.

**Example:** Austin students generated a community tour in their summer program. The story they wanted to tell was Austin as a real "community", not a "hood". They wanted to dispel myths about Austin and re-frame the narrative around their own community to reflect the great things about Austin. The title of their tour became, "From Hood to Community."

### 2. Brainstorm each site's **sub-story** and make connections to the larger tour story/theme.

Review your site research, pinpoint key information about the site you've selected such as the main plot to that site's story (the "scoop"), people involved, issue or problem people addressed, and main results to highlight. In essence, we want the tour-taker to understand how the site's sub-story both stands on its own and is connected to the tour's overall story/theme.

### 3. Create a **short outline** for the site you're writing about that reflects your brainstorm and the site's story.

Look back at your brainstorm and begin to organize the information into a small outline. This outline structure can help:

- I. Key information on "the scoop", "the struggle" or "the story" – including people involved
- II. Details of the site itself and why it's so important to the community
- III. Key information on "the lowdown today" – what's at the site today

### 4. When writing, use **active and descriptive** sentences - and be **creative** with your words.

Show your audience that neighborhoods are not static and unchanging by using active language. By doing so, you show that people and organizations have the power to act. Try to avoid overusing is/was/were and other passive language. Instead show a subject *doing*. By doing this, you will be forced to use more descriptive verbs.

**Example:** Instead of saying, *The people in this neighborhood were friendly.*, consider saying: *The people often say 'hello' and talk peacefully to each other when passing by.*

Also, be creative when introducing your site to the reader. Help the reader *see, feel, hear, and/or experience* something interest-grabbing in or around that site. Even a one-liner to introduce the site can make a big difference. See below.

**Example:** Instead of saying, *The Goodman Theater is located in downtown Chicago.* It has been there for many years, consider saying, *Walk through the towering buildings, look up at the flashing marquee, and open the clear glass doors. You're about to enter one of Chicago's great spaces of drama and intrigue – the Goodman Theater.*

### 5. Keep track of and **cite your sources**.

First, make sure to include information in your guide that accurately represents the information from your sources, whether its a book, a newspaper article, etc. When including a quote, make sure to include who that quote is coming from.

Second, keep a version of your guide that has citations and footnotes. You might not use this version for your physical tour guide (because it can be distracting for a tour) but it is important to keep track of this so people can look at the research you have done and continue in your footsteps.