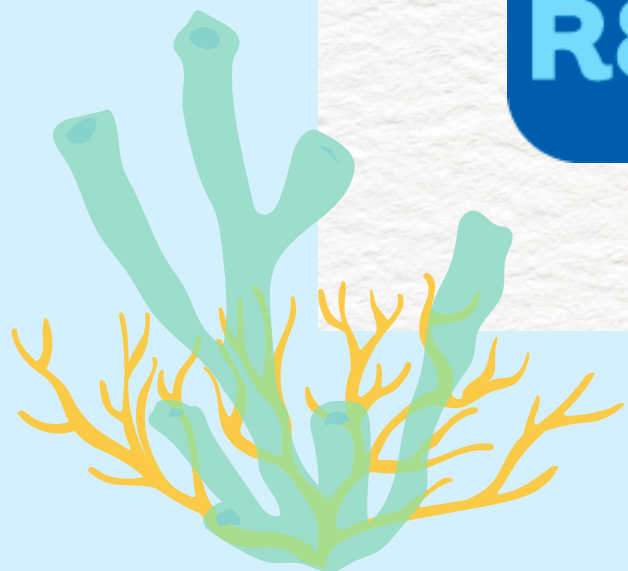




My Trip to the



MYSTIC
AQUARIUM



This social story is made to help me understand what to prepare for and expect during my trip to the Mystic Aquarium.

Today I will be going to visit Mystic Aquarium. Many different animals live at the aquarium. Just like different people have different needs, the animals have unique needs, too. Aquarium staff have special rules for visiting each animal so that they stay happy and healthy. These directions make my visit safe and fun, too!

Before I visit Mystic Aquarium, I will buy my tickets online. When I get to the Aquarium, I may need to wait in line to enter the Main Gallery. The line may be short, long, quiet, or noisy. I will wait for my turn, because I know I will get inside soon. Once I walk in, I can choose to have my picture taken by Aquarium staff. If I choose to do this, I can buy the picture later with a Mystic Aquarium background.

Before I see any animals, I can also visit the Information Booth and ask to borrow a KultureCity sensory bag during my visit. If there is no Mystic Aquarium staff member inside the Information Booth, I can ask any staff member to help me borrow one. The sensory bag has headphones for loud noises, fidgets, and an emotion card to let others know how I am feeling. These items will help me whenever I feel overwhelmed at the Aquarium.

After I decide whether to get a sensory bag, I will explore the Aquarium's Main Gallery. The Main Gallery is an area inside the Aquarium with many different habitats and animals to see. When I first enter the Main Gallery, the lighting will be much darker, so my eyes might need time to adjust. This area might be loud or quiet, empty or crowded. During busy times of the day (between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.), there may be many people walking and talking all at once. These people may be wearing clothing of different colors, speaking at different volumes, and moving their bodies at a different speed than mine. But I know I can take a break at any time by asking to go to a quiet area.

For example, if I am feeling overwhelmed, I can go back outside, or I can look for a Mystic Aquarium staff member in blue or navy blue to take me to the Quiet Room if it is available. The Quiet Room is located in the Main Gallery and has sensory items in there that will help me calm my body. Some items to help calm my body are a cot, a weighted lap pad, and adjustable lighting.

The Mystic Aquarium staff will let me touch certain animals if I want to! Some animals that I am allowed to touch are sting rays, sharks, and crabs. The touch exhibits are located inside and outside of the Main Gallery. There will be a staff member talking in a microphone that may be loud, but it is important to listen to their directions. Before touching the animals, I need to:

- 1. Wait for my turn.**
- 2. Wash my hands.**
- 3. Remove any jewelry.**
- 4. Find an empty spot around the exhibit and only use two fingers to touch the animals. The water may be cold!**
- 5. Wash my hands when I'm done.**

When I am ready to go outside, I can explore the many animals who live in the Aquarium's beautiful outdoor exhibits, like beluga whales, sea lions, seals, turtles, frogs, and penguins. There may be big crowds of people, or not many people at all. I may hear unusual noises, like the bark of the sea lions, whistles and squeaks of the belugas, other guests talking loudly, small boats in the water, or the Aquarium staff sharing animal facts through a microphone. It might be hot and sunny outside, or it might be cloudy and even a little rainy. There may also be unfamiliar smells. At the outdoor exhibits, I can ask the staff questions about the animals, including what they eat and where they live in the wild. I will remember not to drop or throw anything into the exhibits, because doing this could hurt the animals.

While I'm outside, I can find a KultureCity Quiet Area if a noise, sensation, or smell is bothering me. For example, there is a bench located between the Beluga exhibit and the Seals/Sea Lion exhibit, and a bench between the Seal Pup Playspace and the Marsh exhibit. At these spots, I can sit and take a short break for water, a snack, or to calm my body.

During my visit at the Mystic Aquarium, I can also choose to attend the exciting indoor California sea lion show. At the sea lion show I will pick a seat and wait for the show to start. The show will last for about 30 minutes of fun, and I will learn so much about sea lions. There may be many other people watching the show, so I might want to sit off to either side in the blue painted sections to have less people around me. The blue-painted section near the long, ramped exit may be best, so I can go there to have a quieter space for a short break during the show if needed. During the show, there will be loud microphones, music, and changing lights. The sea lions may also bark loudly into the microphones but this is how they communicate with their trainers.

During my visit at the Aquarium, my group may also pay an extra fee to see dinosaur recreations and a frogs and reptiles in the Jurassic Giants exhibit.

Inside this exhibit, it will also be darker than outside. I will see life-size, animatronic dinosaur re-creations that move and make sounds, but they are not dangerous because they are not real. I can watch some short movies in the theaters at this exhibit. During these movies, I will wear 3D glasses to help me see fun special effects, like animals that look like they are coming out of the screen. There will be many sensory experiences, such as flashing lights and loud sounds. Water may splash into my face, and the floor may shake. But I will know that these special effects are for pretend. I can also leave the theater anytime if I need to. Before I leave the Jurassic Giants exhibit, I can spend time in the *frogs!* section and see some unique amphibians from all over the world!

If I didn't bring my own lunch, I can choose to go to the Saltwater Cafe or any of the "snack shacks" for something to eat. There may be smells of fried food and loud noises from other guests that are eating, drinking, or cleaning up their tables. I can sit inside the cafe or outside at a picnic table.

At the end of my visit, I can go to the gift shop to purchase an item to remember my day at the Aquarium. The gift shop may be busy and have a lot of excited people inside. There will be many different gifts to choose from, including stuffed animals, books, and keychains. I will need to wait my turn in line if I do decide to buy a gift.

I will have such a fun day at the Mystic Aquarium! After I see all the exhibits that I want to see, it will be time to say goodbye to my animal friends. I will get ready to go home, but I will be excited to come visit again!