



Family Arts  
Campaign

## Top tips for planning a Family Arts Festival event

The Family Arts Festival, taking place 18 October – 3 November 2013, is the first UK-wide festival of exciting theatre, dance, music and visual arts events designed to increase family participation in the arts.

Not yet uploaded an event? Perhaps you don't have any suitable events planned for that period, or the venue you usually use is fully-booked? We'd love you to get involved and take part in this festival, so read on for our top tips for planning a Family Arts Festival event...

### 1. How about setting up a Big Draw event?

The Big Draw runs 1 October – 3 November 2013 and will feature hundreds of events across the UK and in twenty other countries. Your event details will be listed on one of the most popular drawing websites on the internet, with extensive coverage via the Big Draw blog and social media for featured events. The Big Draw has attracted significant national media coverage since its launch in 2000.

Create or incorporate an activity which involves **making marks with meaning** in any medium or materials, and you'll secure the Campaign's marketing and press support. You will also be eligible for a Drawing Inspiration Award worth up to £1000.

**Looking for ideas?** Check out these inspiring new mini-magazines: [A Family Friendly Big Draw](#) and [Draw Tomorrow](#).

All you need to do is tick the 'in Big Draw' box when entering your event information on the [Family Arts Festival website](#); your listings will then appear on [The Big Draw website](#) from 1 August.

#### What is our definition of 'family'?

For the purposes of the Campaign, we have defined family as **'a group consisting of at least one person over the age of 16, and one under the age of 16'**.



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### 2. Behind the scenes - family tours or open rehearsals

Many families have never ventured inside a theatre, concert hall or gallery, so giving them a chance to visit and look around at some of the things that people don't usually get to see can be a great way of getting families across the threshold.

If possible, set up a meet and greet with different staff – maybe some in the costume department, make-up, set design, lighting design... giving families an insight into how a performance is actually presented.

Or perhaps, with the permission of the performers, you could hold an open rehearsal, and let families see the work in progress – this can provide a fascinating insight into the creative process and encourage attendance at the performance itself. This can be most effective if there is a talk from a workshop leader, or cast member about the performance, and what they are seeing in front of them – what is the director/conductor trying to get from this rehearsal? What is special about the performance?

Looking for ideas? Check out the [Royal Albert Hall Tours](#), [Phoenix Cinema](#), [Leeds Museum and Discovery Centre](#) and the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#).

### 3. Alternative venues

If your venue can't host a specific activity or you are a touring company or orchestra, you could look for other venues to run smaller scale activity – particularly in venues where families are likely to meet – e.g. libraries, community centres, etc.

Taking a small group of performers to give an introductory session to your performance/concert/exhibition in one of these other venues will encourage families to come and see you in your venue. Why not offer special incentives to families who attend as a result of having been at one of these – a free programme and a free drink in the interval, discounted ticket or ticket upgrade, etc...

#### What do we mean by a family arts event or activity?

An arts event or activity of high quality, designed for the enjoyment and appreciation of *all* members of the family group taking part.



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### 4. Pre-event family talks – setting the scene

Even if your performance/concert/exhibition is not primarily aimed at a family audience, it doesn't mean to say that families won't come, and a way to attract more families can be to offer a pre-event talk with someone involved in the production.

This can give families insight into the event they are about to see, it can enrich the artistic experience for families and give them things to look out for during the performance – a particular instrument playing at a specific moment, how the set works, what the lighting plot does for the show etc...

Perhaps it might also include contextualising the event itself; something about the author/composer/artist and why they wrote or produced this particular piece, what was happening in the world at the time that might have influenced their thinking.

This could work even better as a Q&A session if the author/composer/artist is available to take part!

Looking for ideas? Check out [English National Opera](#), [Northern Ballet](#) and the [Theatre Royal, Newcastle](#).

### 5. Family Workshops/taster sessions

Another way of encouraging families to visit your venue is to offer workshops and taster sessions – for instance: costume design, make-up, set design, singing, playing musical instruments, photography, model-making, drawing... These can be themed along with your show/concert/exhibition or be free-standing – whichever works best for you!

Again, consider whether these can be incentivised in some way – as this will encourage families to book for the full performance.

Looking for ideas? Check out the [Brewery Arts Centre](#), [West Yorkshire Playhouse](#) and [Curve Theatre, Leicester](#).

#### Some things to think about...

Think about the timings of these events – do they fit around families' needs?

Think about access and facilities for families – have you told families what is available?

Give families as much information as you can about what you are doing – do they need to bring special equipment (e.g. pens/pencils), wear particular clothing or shoes (e.g. no high heels if walking on the stage!)?



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