



Get Creative Family Arts Festival

eye-boggling arts for all the family
throughout October

10 Top Tips for planning a Get Creative Family Arts Festival event

The Get Creative Family Arts Festival is a national festival of arts events for families. This year's Festival will take place throughout October at venues up and down the country and will encompass the autumn half-term holiday.

The Festival is a public focal point for the Family Arts Campaign, who carries out extensive annual [marketing and PR activity](#) promoting the Festival's events and organisers to targeted family audiences. Running since 2013, the Festival has so far included 13,000 events by over 1,700 organisations, entertaining 1.7 million family members across the UK. **And you can be part of it!**

Any event organiser can take part in the festival, as long as your event:

- Takes place during the festival period (October 2016)
- Includes an artistic element
- Allows both adults and children to participate/attend together

Now's your chance to organise something special that would be just right for a family audience!

If you're not sure where to start, here are our 10 Top Tips on planning a Family Arts event:

1. Organise a creative activity

2015 saw the start of our fantastic partnership with [BBC Get Creative](#) and we'll be giving participatory events extra coverage as part of this year's Get Creative Family Arts Festival. If your event isn't participatory, why not attach a craft activity or a dance or music workshop that enriches the artistic experience, or gives families insight into the performance or exhibition? The Museum of London's family activities included a Second World War Sing-along and sewing and weaving activities - see their latest plans [here](#). Also check out the Bluecoat's [Explore the Gallery](#) engagement trolley – your activities could be in the form of a set workshop or a roaming trolley or trail, offering families the chance to *Get Creative* themselves!

2. Plan an accessible event

A Relaxed performance or activity is designed specifically for those with autism spectrum conditions, learning disabilities or other sensory and communication disorders. Such events provide the opportunity to access the arts in a relaxed environment.

Though the concept of Relaxed Performances began in theatre, a similar environment can be recreated in any art-form, such as storytelling, visual arts, or music. Performances or activities can be adapted in a number of ways to reduce anxiety and create a supportive atmosphere, including adjusting light and sound levels, providing 'chill-out' areas and demonstrating an embracing attitude towards noise and movement.

If you're putting on a week of workshops, why not specify one as Relaxed? Although a welcoming atmosphere is always the aim where families are concerned, planning your event as Relaxed provides an extra layer of confidence for families looking for inclusive activities. We'll also tag the event as Relaxed on our website and advertise it as such through relevant channels.

Audio-described, captioned and British Sign Language interpreted performances can also be part of this year's Festival.

To learn more about putting on an accessible event, have a look at our compilation of [accessibility resources](#), and see how it can work in a family context in our [Relaxed Concert case study](#). You can also take inspiration from last year's [Autism friendly backstage tours](#) at Sunderland Empire.

3. Give it a Halloween theme

Halloween night will mark the finale of this year's Festival, and a ghostly theme offers lots of opportunities to engage families. It's also a great way to incorporate the arts into your family offer even if you're not an arts venue - you could run a family friendly ghost tour with acting and storytelling, a pumpkin carving activity, or a spooky-themed performance. Last year's Festival included a [mass pumpkin carving](#) event at BAL TIC Centre for



Juice Festival 2015

Contemporary Art, a [ghostly literature event](#) at the Library of Birmingham, and a [spooky tour](#) of Manchester Museum. Also have a look at [this case study](#) put together by Museums at Night on how a family-friendly ghost tour can help you attract new visitors.

4. Go Behind the scenes

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 speaking 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 [National Theatre](#), [Leeds Museum and Discovery Centre](#) and the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#).

5. Use an alternative venue

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 regular space next time. Why not offer special incentives to arts 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...



Sinfonia Viva The Boat & The Blue at Rolls Royce Heritage Centre, 2015

You could take your activity outdoors as Head4arts did with [Arty Parky](#) during last year's Festival, perform in a [shopping centre](#), or venture out [onto the water!](#)

If you're a producing company or artist, bring the arts into a museum setting and double brand as a Family Arts Festival and Museums at Night event. Museums at Night takes place 28 & 29 October 2016 and you can [register here](#).

6. 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](#) or [BBC Philharmonic](#).

7. Family Workshops/taster sessions

Another way of encouraging families to visit your venue or organisation 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 [Lyric Hammersmith](#), [English National Ballet](#) and [Bristol Choral Society](#).

8. How about setting up a Big Draw event?

The Big Draw runs throughout October and will feature hundreds of events across the UK and beyond. You can register at thebigdraw.org where you can upload your event details. Once you've done that, head over to familyartsfestival.com and upload your listing there too in order to be part of both festivals.

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 mini-magazines: [A Family Friendly Big Draw](#).



Busy Parents Network's Big Draw, 2015

9. Invite families to an event from your regular programme

You may have an event that isn't specifically programmed for families but that could be appealing to them, especially those with older children.

Consider the content, length and timing of your event, and communicate this to families so that they know what to expect. For guidance on this see our free resources library at familyarts.co.uk.

Then let families know that it's relevant to them by including it in the Get Creative Family Arts Festival and marking it with the festival logo. Make sure they are prepared by making plenty of information about the event available prior to their visit.

Looking for ideas? See how [Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra](#) introduced families with children to their main concert season.

10. What now?

Case Study inspiration

Hundreds of exciting new works are created every year especially for the Festival. Past Festival events have included a Mini Messiah in Bristol, a Family Arts Boat in Salford, and a community dance project in a tower block in Birmingham. You can read case studies of past Festival events [here](#).

Resources

- Use the [Family Arts Standards](#) to help you consider event timings, accessibility and facilities, to ensure they fit around families needs. [Sign up for free here](#).
- Give families as much information as you can about what they are going to see or do – use our free [Content Guidance toolkit](#).
- Use our free [Pricing toolkit](#) to decide how to price your event.
- Take the free [online Family Arts training course](#).
- For more resources visit [familyarts.co.uk](#).

Register

You'll be able to upload your Festival event listing to [familyartsfestival.com](#) and download Festival branding from early April, ready for the public launch of Festival listings in June.

[Register your organisations detail now](#) to ensure you're kept up to date with festival news.

Remember that the earlier you upload your event details the more we'll be able to feature your event in our national marketing and press campaign!

We hope that you will be able to join us for the [Get Creative Family Arts Festival 2016!](#)