

School Programs FAQ

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This page has information to make your field trip as enjoyable as possible. Below we have tips on how to book, what to do to prepare for your visit, what to do on the day of your visit, and other frequently asked questions.

All of our programs are developed to support the Prescribed Learning Outcomes of the BC Ministry of Education's Integrated Resource Packages.

How much is a program?

- Each program has a flat rate cost. Program costs can be found on the individual program pages.
- Aquarium membership for students cannot be applied to students participating in programs
- One enrolling teacher free per class, as well as any support staff required for student accessibility.
- Additional adults are charged a discounted gate rate. Due to fire code restrictions, not all adults may be allowed into the program space, but will meet the group after the workshop.
- Adults with Aquarium membership are free, but must present them upon arrival. Not all adults will be able to accompany the structured program.

What if I need to cancel my program?

Email us at programs@ocean.org or call the bookings office at (604) 659-3552 – select option # 8. If you cancel within 10 business days of your field trip date, your school will be invoiced for flat rate cost of the program. If you cancel with more than 10 business days' notice, only the deposit will be retained.

What time should I arrive?

Aim to arrive **at least 15 minutes before** your program start time. Our educational programs, especially our newly redeveloped wet lab programs, are action-packed so it's best not to risk arriving late. Program start and end times cannot be changed.

Where do I meet for my program?

If you have booked a structured program for any time during the day, you may enter through the Admissions entrance and meet in the Teck Engagement Gallery ([see map](#)). If your program begins before the Aquarium is open, meet at the front Admissions entrance and Aquarium Education Staff will collect you.

[Download Visitors Map](#)

How do I check in my school group?

You must check in at the front Admissions entrance of the Aquarium. Students are invited to wait calmly and use the restrooms at the bottom of the front stairs while the group leader checks in. Please have your behavior policy, and numbers of students and adults ready.

What if we're running late on the day of our visit?

Call the bookings office at (604) 659-3552 – select option # 8 or our reception desk at (604) 659-3400 as soon as possible. If you happen to get voicemail, please leave a message with a cellphone number (if you have one).

Where can my class eat lunch?

Please note that the Aquarium has very limited covered spaces for classes to eat their lunch, and these covered spaces are often in unheated outdoor areas. For maximum ease, please make plans to eat on your school bus, in the park, or an alternative location to ensure you have a comfortable space for your class to eat lunch.

How much do we pay for parking?

Where can the bus park? Pay parking is in effect throughout Stanley Park, including the Aquarium. Call EasyPark at 604-682-6744 for details, including bus parking. If your school is charged for parking by your bus company, you can apply to have the fee waived by the Vancouver Parks Board (Tel: 311). Please have the parking fee as a separate line in your documentation when applying to the Parks Board.

Where can my class keep their belongings (bags/jackets/lunches)?

There are unlocked bins, suitable for storing a class set of lunches on the Wild Coast deck. To get there, you go through the doors labelled "Wild Coast" next to guest services and look immediately to your right. These bins are available on a first come, first serve basis. As they are unlocked, make sure you leave no valuables in the bin.

How do I see a 4D show while at the Aquarium?

Like all shows at the Aquarium, the 4D Theatre is free to all visitors, and will accommodate guests on a first come, first serve basis. All who want to attend the show must be present (with a chaperone if they are age 12 and under) in the line and must stay in the line to keep their place. You cannot save a space in line for friends if they are running late. If you want to ensure a private screening for your group, you must register for our "4D Theatre: Big Picture Conservation" programs at least 2 weeks prior to your visit.

Why does the Aquarium not allow small foreign objects inside?

Small items like balloons, soap bubbles, glitter etc. are easily blown into the animals' homes, and can pose a health hazard. Any such items must be left at school, and in the event they come along, must be kept sealed and not in use when on the Aquarium grounds.

Where do my School Program Fees go?

The Vancouver Aquarium is a non-profit society dedicated to the conservation of aquatic life. Our fees go towards maintaining the needed infrastructure of our top tier education programs, including: the care and feeding of the animals, maintaining the extensive physical demands of a heavily plumbed building, and retaining world class and highly educated biologists and teachers to engage your students. We keep our school program fees as low as possible, with our education department working just short of a cost recovery basis based on the requirements just listed.

Checklists

Before You Arrive

- **Behavior Policy** is read and signed, students are notified of expectations. Group leaders are responsible for student behavior at all times. Signed behavior policy must be presented upon check in.
- **Number of students** The School Program price includes free admission to the aquarium for the day, so feel free to wander the galleries before and/or after your program. Aquarium hours are 10:00 am until 5:00 pm.
- **Determine your method of payment:** Only one payment can be made for the group. Payment must be made in full on the day of your visit. You can arrange an account for direct school billing or pay by credit card for maximum ease. You can also pay by cash or business cheque addressed to Ocean Wise Conservation Association. Please leave the amount on the cheque blank until the day of the trip to account for changes in student numbers.
- **Student Attire:** Remind students to dress for all weather. Some galleries and programs are outside.
- **Prepare student groups and name tags.** This makes a much more smooth experience for everyone involved.
- **Chaperones:** The Aquarium recommends 1 adult for every 5 students for supervision. Please brief your chaperones on their role for the day (ex: Ensuring student behavior, meeting places for the end of day, etc.)

On Arrival

- Check-in at the Front Admissions Entrance on arrival. Have confirmation number and number of participants ready. Submit behavior policy.
- If the program starts right away, the class is asked to gather in the **Bill Reid Plaza** ([see map](#)) with their Group Leader (teacher, chaperone etc.). They will be met with an Aquarium Coordinator at that spot. Otherwise, enter the Aquarium with the class and return to the School Programs Meeting Area in the **Teck Engagement Gallery** ([see map](#)) at least 10 minutes before program start time.
- Group is greeted by an Aquarium Coordinator in the **Teck Engagement Gallery** up to 10 minutes before the program start time.
- Your Aquarium Coordinator will divide classes into smaller groups for programs. Feel free to assist where required and identify students who are in need of additional assistance or learning support so we can better accommodate them.

Helpful Tips

Assign Student Groups: We recommend that student chaperone groups are assigned prior to visiting the Aquarium. Please note that all **persons aged 12 and under MUST be accompanied by an adult at all times in the Aquarium.**

Nametags: To help our educators address your students directly and in the event of an emergency (fire alarms, lost students), nametags for younger students in our programs are strongly encouraged.

Student Belongings: Bags, jackets, lunches etc. can be kept in our unlocked storage bins on the Wild Coast (see map). These are available on a first come, first serve basis only. Valuables can be kept on their person, or they may use one of the paid lockers in the Teck Engagement gallery.

Teacher/Chaperone Communication: Please be sure to provide all chaperones with the lead teacher's contact information and you may choose to collect chaperone contact information as well. It may be beneficial to provide your chaperones with a number to the school in case of an emergency.

Showtimes: The Aquarium offers a number of shows as part of your admission, including our 4D movie theater, Marine Mammal shows, and a number of dive shows and creature features. **All shows are subject to change without notice.** Once you arrive at the Aquarium, please look on our electronic show boards for the most up-to-date show time information. Shows can be attended before or after your school program, and will be available on a first come, first serve basis.

Giftshop: If you wish to provide time for shopping, students are invited to visit the Gift Shop at the Aquarium Exit. This store carries many popular items priced to fit a student's budget. Please remember that students must be accompanied by a chaperone while shopping. Be prepared, as all groups exit the Aquarium through the gift shop.

Still Have More Questions?

Please email education@ocean.org or ask your knowledgeable coordinator on the day of the field trip