

Volunteer Usher Guidebook

APT’s volunteer ushers are an integral part of the front-of-house staff and work with the house staff on the welcoming, guidance, safety and comfort of all patrons. At APT, we strive to ensure that each and every patron has an extraordinary experience, and our ushers are key to that effort. A positive attitude is essential! We ask for – and appreciate – your adherence to our policies, procedures, and protocols. They’re all designed to serve this agenda. Your hard work keeps everything running smoothly and ensures our patrons have the best possible experience.

THANK YOU!
Cari Stebbins
Operations Manager

Please read the information in this guidebook fully before the start of the season and refer to it as needed throughout the season. We strive to provide a consistent, professional, and uniform set of expectations and procedures for you to follow. A common-sense application of these principles will ensure that both you and our patrons have the best possible experience.

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Contact Information

USHER E-MAIL: ushers@americanplayers.org

HOUSE MANAGER OFFICE: 608 588 9204

Use this number to sign-up, leave a message for the house manager or make changes to shift dates or contact info.

EMERGENCY CONTACT: 608 588 2361

Please note: The Box Office will be the contact **ONLY** on the day of your show if you are late, or if you unable to attend due to an emergency.

Office Hours

During the season, the house manager is usually available at the number above Tuesdays through Sundays, two and a half hours before curtain until one hour before curtain. Off-season office hours will vary. You may also leave messages on the House Manager's voice mail and they will be returned as soon as possible.

House Rules and Policies

Food or Drink

Carry-ins of food and drink are **NOT** allowed in the theater. Drinks purchased at the concession stand may be brought into the seating area Up the Hill and in Touchstone, but no glass bottles are allowed. Drinks purchased in glass bottles must be poured into a plastic cup before entering the theater.

No Cameras or Recording Devices of any kind

Cameras and other recording devices are **NOT** allowed in the theater during the performance. If the stage is empty, patrons may take a picture of the bare set. If you see someone taking pictures or recording during the performance, note their location as specifically as possible and inform the House Manager immediately.

Late seating

Patrons who arrive late will be seated at an appropriate interval during the performance at the discretion of the house manager.

Aisles must remain clear at all times

Please keep the aisles clear, as they will be used by our actors. Wheelchairs, crutches, bags, etc. must be kept under the seat or in designated areas.

Infants and children under the age of six are not permitted into the theaters

If you do encounter an infant or small child, please note their location and inform the house manager immediately.

No Pets

No pets of any kind (with the exception of service animals) are allowed up the Hill or in the theaters. If you encounter a non-service animal, please note their location and inform the house manager immediately.

No smoking

There is absolutely no smoking in either APT theater. Please smoke in designated areas only. If you see someone smoking outside the designated area, please inform the house manager or kindly direct them to the smoking area.

Weather

In the event of rain, every effort will be made to complete the performance, including playing in light rain. If the show is held due to weather, the decision to play or cancel will be made within 45 minutes following the rain hold. If the show is canceled before the first act is complete, patrons may receive a refund or tickets for another 2015 season performance (based on availability). If canceled after the first act is complete, there are no refunds but patrons may receive tickets to another 2015 performance (based on availability). Unfortunately, no immediate refunds or exchanges are possible.

Shuttle

Shuttles to theaters begin 45 minutes prior to show time and stop 10 minutes before the performance. Patrons should be at the shuttle stop no later than 30 minutes before the performance is scheduled to begin. Service begins again at the end of the show. If a patron needs assistance getting down the Hill before the show is over, please locate the house manager as soon as possible.

Wheelchair seating

Wheelchair seating is available and provided in row F of sections 5 and 6 in the Uphill Theatre and in select seats in row E in the Touchstone Theatre. This seating can be pre-arranged with the box office.

Assisted Listening Devices

Assisted listening devices are available in both theaters. Please direct patrons to the house manager to acquire the device. Please ask patrons to have an I.D. ready.

Volunteer Basics

Ushers must be able to respond quickly in case of emergency (see Emergency Procedures below) because the number one priority for ushers is the safety of our patrons. Ushers must also be physically able to maneuver on wood chips up the Hill, use stairs, and stand for at least 30 minutes. Ushers must be 15 years of age or older.

Attendance and Punctuality

American Players Theatre depends upon its ushers! It is vital that ushers arrive on time and ready to work. The assistant house manager will lead a pre-show orientation to relay important information regarding the performance. You will not be able to meet the expectations of your job if you do not know this information. If you are late, you may not be permitted to work, and it will count as a no-show. And though we hate to do it, if you have two no-shows, you will no longer be allowed to usher. Please take note: From the parking lot, our Uphill Theatre is a 10-minute walk and our Touchstone Theatre is roughly a 5-minute walk. **If you need to cancel, let the house manager know as soon as possible (at least a week) so we can fill your position. If you find your own substitute, please call the house manager in advance with that person's contact information.**

Arrival Time

Arrival time is one hour before show time. For example, if the show time is 7:30 pm you should be at the theater and checked in no later than 6:30 pm. If you arrive early, please wait patiently. The house manager starts orientation 1 hour before curtain. Orientation takes about 15 minutes. Ushers arriving after orientation begins may still be permitted to sign in but will be marked as tardy. Ushers arriving after orientation will not be allowed to usher and will be counted as a no-show. These ushers may purchase a ticket to the performance, depending on availability. Following orientation, ushers volunteering in the concession stand will receive a briefing in the concessions stand and the remaining ushers will help to tidy the theater or take care of additional business. There is usually a short break for ushers to purchase concessions, use the facilities, etc. before the house opens 30 minutes before the show.

Storing and securing your belongings

If you need to store your belongings during the show you may leave them with the House Manager to be stored in the booth. These items will be stored until after the show and cannot be accessed during intermission. Please turn off cell phones when you arrive. They must remain off until final curtain. For emergency use only, please give friends and family the APT emergency contact number 608 588 7401.

Before the show

There is a lot of activity before the theater opens and you may be asked to stay out of the theater. When the lobby/theater opens, please be at your post and ready. This is not a time to eat, sit, or read. All volunteers should be familiar with emergency policies; the locations of restrooms, water fountains, etc.; and the information in this handbook. The house manager will visit all volunteers at their posts, give any additional information, and answer questions.

Intermission and Post-Show requirements

As an APT usher, you are required to wear your smock at intermission and provide assistance to patrons if needed. After the show, we ask that ushers pick up any playbills or trash in their section before leaving.

Food and Beverage

Ushers may consume food and beverage until patrons arrive. All food and drink consumption must cease while greeting and assisting patrons.

Working with the House Managers

The house manager will tell you when the house opens and when you may be seated. At the end of the show, please do not leave without signing out with the house manager.

Attitude and Conduct

Our volunteer ushers work very closely with our patrons. Please be sure to exercise patience and courtesy at all times.

Rain/Weather

The occurrence of inclement weather is when we need our ushers most! Please keep in mind that we never cancel a performance ahead of time. While we expect you to make every effort to arrive for your scheduled shift, please put your safety first regarding the weather.

Usher Survey

All ushers with a valid e-mail address will receive an usher survey. Your feedback is important to us, so we encourage you to fill it out. However, if you have any comments, ideas or problems at any time during the season, please contact the house manager.

Dress code

We require all volunteer ushers to wear a smock and nametag during the performance so as to be easily identifiable to both our patrons and staff. Beyond the smock we ask that you dress comfortably for the weather if you are ushering at our outdoor theater. We do not provide rain gear or jackets, so please come prepared. We recommend shoes that cover and protect your toes. Also, remember to wear shoes that you can stand in for extended periods of time and do a lot of walking up and down the aisles. Please refrain from wearing strong fragrances as some of our patrons may be sensitive.

Volunteer Usher Duties

General Usher Requirements

1. Volunteers must be capable of administering the duties of all positions. Physical requirements include, but are not limited to, carrying up to 15 pounds, walking up and down staircases, and standing for long periods of time
2. Ushers are expected to stay through entire performance and complete all tasks.
3. APT reserves the right to appoint and terminate volunteer ushers if it is deemed necessary.
4. Comfortable working with the public with a smile and friendly disposition!

Aisles

Aisle ushers stand at the top of the aisles and hand out programs, answer questions, keep glass out, and guide patrons to their seats. You should be friendly, able to climb stairs, and have good eyesight to read tickets. Please show patrons to their seats if they are not familiar with the theater. If a ticketing conflict arises, get the house manager to resolve the issue. Please always use tact and get the house manager without delay! At intermission, ushers stay visible, answer any questions that arise and keep people from bringing glass into the house. At the end of a performance, please help pick up programs and look for lost items.

Tickets

Ticket ushers stand at the front door of the Touchstone Theatre or at the top of the path Uphill to tear tickets, greet patrons, and direct them to the proper aisle. Ticket ushers must be friendly and quick! You should have sharp eyesight for reading tickets. Please check date, time, and performance. When tearing tickets, ushers should tear the right-hand, smaller portion of the ticket, giving the patron back the larger, left-hand portion. Think of it as “we get the small, they get the big.” As you tear the ticket, politely direct the patron to the proper aisle. All tickets have the aisle printed on them. For example: “Good Evening! Let’s see... you’ll be going to Aisle Two today. Enjoy the show.” At the end of the performance, please help pick up the theater and look for lost items.

Assisted Listening Station

The ALD usher works inside the house manager's office, providing Assisted Listening Devices (ALDs) to hearing impaired patrons and answering questions. You should be patient and friendly. Patrons may be hearing-impaired, so please use tact, face the patron when speaking, and speak clearly when delivering instructions on proper use of the devices. Be polite and patient and explain things as often as necessary.

Concessions

The concessions stand needs help pre-show and during intermission to restock products and pour hot drinks. A separate orientation is given for this post immediately after the main orientation each shift.

Stage Monitors

For some shows in Touchstone, it may be necessary to assign ushers to monitor the entrances to the stage, backstage areas, or stage-door stairs. Ushers assigned to this duty should be able to be firmly polite with patrons, and comfortable dealing with the public.

Emergency Procedures

In General

- Should you hear an announcement asking you to evacuate the theater, do so—but assist any patrons with mobility impairments if needed.
- Should you hear an announcement indicating that we will be having an unexpected intermission or that we will be temporarily holding the performance, return to your posts.
- Should any patron need medical assistance or first aid, find the house manager immediately.
- Should any patron disturb the performance in a manner that requires attention, find the house manager immediately.
- In all instances, please remain calm and follow the announcements and house manager's instructions, placing your own safety first.
- If you feel you are in a life-threatening situation, please remove yourself from that situation.
- Ushers are expected to assist patrons, especially patrons with mobility issues, in exiting the theater. Please make sure to return walkers and wheelchairs to patrons.
- Do not leave the theater without signing out with the house manager unless your personal safety is at issue.
- When in doubt, return to Aisle 5 (Uphill) or Will-call (Touchstone) for instructions.
- If you have first-aid training, please notify the house manager when you sign in.
- A wheelchair is available in both theaters. Please ask a house staff member to assist.
- First-aid kits and an AED are available in either theater.

Minor accidents and falls

Ushers should stay with the injured person and send another usher—or patron, if necessary—to get the house manager. If the patron insists that he or she does not need assistance but appears injured, simply note the patron's appearance and where the patron is sitting, and report the incident to the house manager immediately. There is an accident report that the house manager must have the patron fill out. Should a patron request a bandage, ice pack or bee sting medication, those items are available from the house manager. We do not give out any other over-the-counter medications, but the Gift Shop does have aspirin and other basic over-the-counter drugs for sale.

Medical emergency

In case of heart attack, stroke, seizure, or medical emergency, notify the house manager immediately. If it is during the performance, the stage manager will make the following announcement: "Ladies and Gentlemen, we are experiencing a medical emergency. Would individuals with medical training please identify themselves to the house manager in the (lobby/house)?" If possible the house manager will move the person either to the lobby, or, if the situation warrants, into the gift shop. Return to posts and await instruction from the house manager. The house staff may need assistance clearing the lobby or the area around the patron in the event of an ambulance call.

Tornado Warning

In the event of a tornado warning (a tornado has been spotted in the area), the stage manager will make the following announcement: "Ladies and Gentlemen, please listen carefully as we are under a tornado warning and ask you to take shelter with us. Our staff will direct you by your section to our shelters." Ushers should also take shelter in adherence to the announcement, helping any patrons in need along the way. When the warning is over, the stage manager will make an "all clear" announcement. In Touchstone, the audience and staff remain inside the theater.

Rain

In the event of a rain delay, an announcement will be made that we will be holding the performance. You may find shelter during the hold, but please assist any patrons with mobility impairments if needed. Please report to Aisle 5 and be ready to report back to your posts in the event that we resume the show. The house staff will have paper towels at the ready for you to pass out as we re-seat. If the show is cancelled and you wish to re-schedule for another date, please contact the house manager.

Thank you for your interest in assisting American Players Theatre as an usher. We look forward to working with you this summer!