Nota bene (pronounced /ˈnoʊtəˈbeɪnə/, alternate pronunciations /ˈnoʊtə beni, 'beni, 'biní/, plural form notate bene) is an Italian and Latin phrase meaning ‘note well’. The phrase first appeared in writing circa 1721.

Often abbreviated as ‘N.B.’, nota bene comes from the Latin roots notare (‘to note’) and bene (‘well’). It is in the singular imperative mood, instructing one individual to note well the matter at hand. In present-day English it is used, particularly in legal papers, to draw the attention of the reader to a certain (side) aspect or detail of the subject on hand, translating it as ‘pay attention’ or ‘take notice’. While ‘N.B.’ is often used in academic writing, ‘note’ is a common substitute.

Deliberately unstructured, this resource is designed to act as a collection of prompts to inspire ideas for working with a group visiting the gallery. You are invited to dip in and out of the activities and thoughts, before, during and after your visit, developing and adapting them to suit your particular group.

The activities are intended to recognise and allow space for your own interests, expertise and knowledge, inviting you to explore Tate in a diversity of ways.

N.B. On a number of pages we have included suggestions for how you might use or extend these ideas.

Footnotes indicate artists whose practice relates to the activities. Some of the artists listed may be on display at the time of your visit.
N.B. Make a scribble on the first page of a sketchbook to encourage you to be less precious about your work.
N.B. Use long strips of paper, perhaps a receipt roll, along a corridor. Or cover the space you choose with paper on the floor and try this out as a whole group, aiming to fill the paper in ten minutes.

Fiona Banner
Jenny Holzer
Bob and Roberta Smith

Spend 10 minutes writing a stream of consciousness about the room or space you are in.

Don’t stop writing even if you run out of things to say.
Pick 3 words that stand out in describing the space.
Share your words with a partner.
With others.
With the space.
Repeat out loud.

Draw a place a space or an artwork you know well without looking at the paper.
Include as much detail as possible.

When you look again add anything you might have forgotten.

Without speaking group the words from the most to the least important.

Remove 3 words which aren’t relevant.
If necessary have a silent argument about the finished order.
Group some everyday objects together in a public place.

Leave them for other people to find.

N.B. Record this activity in different ways by photographing, sketching or filming the objects in situ. Record them both with and without an audience. If they get moved record them again.

Tony Cragg  Cathy Wilkes
Ian Kiaer  Lamia Joreige

Consider how you might place yourself.
Think
Consider
Reconsider
Try
Do
Imagine
Find
Draw
Make
Fold
Stop
Start
Be
List everything that you can hear right now

Place something out of context
An object
A sound
A colour

Use different methods or materials to respond to a space, a place or room

Try plasticine, ribbon or a single sheet of paper

Think about these materials differently

Fold Curl Roll Escape
N.B. This activity can be adapted according to how much time you have. You might repeat your actions over the course of a lesson, a day, a week, a month or even a term. Do your marks change, can you replicate a gesture? If you record using a video camera you could edit the results together to animate the sequence into a short film.

Allan Kaprow
Victor Pasmore
Yvonne Rainer

Francis Alÿs
Richard Long
Robert Morris
Write or draw your expectations of a place or a room you are about to go into.

Use the gallery or room title to direct your conceptual thinking and ideas.

Seal them in an envelope.

Much later, open the envelope and consider what you wrote and how it might have changed.

Describe everything you can see from where you are right now.

Use as much detail as possible.

Make a three-dimensional representation of something flat.

Use only the things you have with you.
Observe someone you don’t know looking around the gallery
Take note of how they move
When they stop
What are they looking at, what might they be thinking?

Listen to someone else’s conversation
Imagine what you would say to them if you joined in

Find an artist who you think you can relate to

N.B. Consider the different methods you could use to record this activity, you could use notebooks, include times and dates, use a camera or a voice recorder. How would you then display this information for an audience?

Ian Breakwell
Thomas Struth
Lie down
Close your eyes
Change
Alter
Become

Don't fear spending time with an artwork
Look longer
Look again
Look closer
Look differently
Look until your eyes hurt
Look until you see things that aren't actually there

Choose an artwork at random to go and look at
Put a pin into the Tate map
Spend an hour with a single artwork
Get to know it
Spend time together
N.B. When you have completed this activity try having a balloon debate. Imagine one artwork needs to be removed from the Tate balloon in order to keep it in the air. Everyone must argue for why their chosen artwork should be jettisoned. Which artwork will be thrown out of the balloon?

List the artworks in the collection that don’t interest you

Find something in the Tate that you think no-one else will have noticed
Highlight it in some way
Now look for something you might have missed out

Interview other gallery visitors
Ask them about what they have seen
Ask a visitor assistant which artwork they think is best

Find an artwork you think is difficult and stay with it until you begin to make sense of it
Consider why it is in the Tate collection
Consider taste and opinion

Who decides?

Martin Creed
Ceal Floyer

Carl Andre
Turner Prize
N.B. Consider ways in which meaning gets changed e.g. by time, context or interpretation.

Pass a sentence along a line using Chinese Whispers. What is the result?

Share a conversation with a group of others standing closely together.
Walk slowly backwards away from each other and continue the discussion but without raising your voices.
Continue backwards as far as you can go.
Then walk slowly back together still continuing the conversation.

How do you feel?
What did you hear?
What do you imagine you missed?
Use the windows
Consider the building
Do something unexpected
Draw attention to the architecture
using performance

Try and do it using action and no sound
Try and do it using sound but no action
Come up with 10 words to describe an artwork
Write them down
Arrange them
Re-arrange them
Swap words with someone else

Jean Arp
Peter Blake
Kurt Schwitters

Marina Abromowic
Trisha Brown
Roman Ondek

John Wood and Paul Harrison
Look for the spaces between artworks

Draw attention to negative space

N.B. Explore the negative space in your setting before you come to the gallery. Experiment with filling spaces with different materials. Can the same materials fill both big and small spaces? Find different spaces and use your bodies to inhabit them. Record negative space by sketching or using photography. In the gallery work together to try and fill a space. Use your voices.

Paola Pivi
Rachel Whiteread

Barbara Hepworth
Carsten Höller
Ask someone you don’t know to draw something in your sketchbook

Find an image in your sketchbook and look for an artwork that connects to it in someway

Think about

Form
Surface
Concept
Presence
Subject

N.B. Use this drawing as a starting point. Whose drawing is it now? How does the drawing differ to other drawings in your sketchbook?

Jean-Michel Basquiat
Look for lines
Draw all the straight lines you can see
Make a drawing using coloured tape or masking tape

List things around you that are made of wood
Take your time

List as many white things as you can see

Measure something without using a ruler, a tape measure or a clock

N.B. Ask the group to collect things that share a particular quality, such as colour, material or function. What are their differences, what are their similarities? Thinking about how curators make decisions, arrange and display according to different criteria such as scale or importance.

Patrick Caulfield
Jim Lambie
Piet Mondrian

N.B. This activity can be done in a variety of locations, think big! A corridor, a sports hall or outside. Photograph your drawing from different perspectives. When the artwork has gone, exhibit the photographs. Are they now the artwork?

Marcel Duchamp
Cildo Meireles
Robert Ryman
Think about form
How can you represent something in as few lines as possible?

What is the most basic way to remember something?
Breathe on a window
Draw in your own mist

Leave a disappearing image behind
Think about the idea of

Found elements
Look for a discarded object that will remind you of your visit

Leave something behind

Consider what could happen to it
Write down its continuing story

Find an artwork you think you could have made yourself
Later, try and re-make it better

Find a conceptual artwork you think you could have come up with yourself
Later, try and re-think it better

What do you mean by better?
What does someone else mean?
Tackle an installation
Consider a space, a place, an environment
Alter a space somehow
Inhabit it
Project onto it
Project into it
Place something unexpected there
Take something away
Move something
How do rules affect a place?
How do expected behaviours change perceptions?
Respond to your experiences

Make an exhibition in a small or abandoned space
Perhaps inside a cupboard or under a stairwell
Invite people to the opening of your exhibition

Andre Cadere
Duveen Galleries
Turbine Hall

Mike Nelson
Mark Wallinger
Fislis and Weiss

Marisa Mertz
Robert Therrien
The Wrong Gallery
Reflect and Project
Interaction isn’t always about action

Tie yourself to a partner with ribbon or fabric
Without using spoken language, guide them around a space
How else can you communicate without talking?

Tell whoever you are with that you don’t know the answer to a question they ask
Use ten different techniques to draw or create an image of the same thing.

Create a curve
Bend a page
Score and fold

Turn something flat into something solid.

Create a texture
Make something shiny
Gesture a mark
Suggest a shape
Create a surface
Leave a residue

N.B. Use painting to investigate these instructions. Consider the diversity of media and techniques used by artists. Explore processes and inspirations.

Frank Auerbach
David Batchelor
Jean Dubuffet

Felix Gonzalas
Gary Hume

Donald Judd
Franz Kline
Susumu Koshimizu

Leon Kossoff
Robert Morris
Piero Manzoni

Paul Neagu
Line something up with your eyes

Look through something
Tear something so you can see through it

Represent the whole of Tate as a single image
N.B. Use a postcard, a drawing or a photograph to take an artwork home. How does scale and context affect your reading of it? Try photocopying, projecting or drawing using a grid to change the scale.

Ron Mueck
Claes Oldenburg
Describe something to someone else using only drawing

Bring together a collection of objects which remind you of your visit. Anything from a paper napkin, a Tate map, a pencil sharpening, a sweet wrapper, a tube ticket, a photograph taken on your mobile phone.

Display the objects in a museum-like collection.
Make labels for them.
Make a box or plinth for them.
Photograph your collection.