

Meeting Mickey Mouse: Making the Most of Your Character Meet

by Terry Rohrer, PassPorter Guest Contributor

You have made the big decision to take your kids to Walt Disney World and meet Mickey Mouse.

For months you have been planning on how to get there, where to stay and how much money to budget for souvenirs. You are making the kids watch every Disney movie ever made so they will know all the Disney characters.

So you arrive at the Magic Kingdom, and after walking through the gates and past the train station, you appear on Main Street U.S.A. The kids are excited and next thing you know you are in line to get autographs and pictures of two mice in dresses. But your brain freezes -- you don't remember their names! You realize that you don't have anything to write with or on, and suddenly before your camera is ready, it is your turn. Now the kids freeze and try to hide inside your shorts. Just then, you notice the other parents and kids waiting for their turn. You panic and hold the kids or even take them up close to get the picture. When you get home, the only picture you have of your children's first visit to Disney World is of them crying and trying to run away from two mice. I'm going to give you some tips to prevent this scene and **help create lifetime memories**.

Getting the perfect picture with the Disney characters takes a little planning and some great timing. It all starts before you leave. There is no "magic" age that makes kids want to run up to Mickey or even just not run away from the famous mouse. A good place to have a test run is at your mall at Christmas or Easter or at your local Chuck E. Cheese's. If they do not want to get close to the Easter Bunny, then you may have the reaction I mentioned earlier and you may want to wait before you take that big vacation. On the other hand, if they run up to Chuck E. Cheese and want to talk, play or even dance, then be ready for a great vacation.

So now that you know your child is ready, a little planning is in order. Before you go to Disney World rent, **buy or borrow any Disney movie** you can get your hands on. This will help you as you run into different characters. With a little searching, I found which characters would be out greeting guests, and where some of them would appear before we went. But as with all things Disney, this is subject to change. So just because you found a message board or blog where someone said they

found Snow White next to her attraction in the Magic Kingdom, does not mean that she will be there during your vacation. Disney changes the character schedule all the time.

Not all Disney characters appear regularly each day. If after watching all those Disney movies, they have their heart set on meeting Aladdin and Jasmine, Disney has a way for you to find out if and when they will be appearing. Ask any cast member wearing a pin displaying **Mickey's white glove**. They have a schedule of where and when all the characters will make their appearances that day.

Also, on each of the Disney park maps, there will be **locations marked with the same Mickey's white glove icon**. If the map shows that Captain Hook will be near the Pirates of the Caribbean but you get there and don't see him, just ask any cast member in the area and they will be happy to help. You may not realize you are 10 feet from where he will be, but that you're just a little early. Don't panic, and before you know it he will appear and be ready to sign an autograph and have his picture taken with all of you.

All of the Disney characters will have a "greeter" with them. This is a cast member that will help keep everyone who is waiting to see the characters in line, and the best part is if you ask them, they will take a picture of your entire family with the character. I find, like many unofficial family photographers, that when I get home I am not in any of the pictures! With a little help from the greeter, this doesn't have to happen. Also, do not let the line or anxious kids behind you make you hurry and miss something. Be sure to make a list of characters that you want to see, and once you find them, take all the time you want within reason.

There are a few other things you can do to enhance your experience. Be sure to have **something that the characters can sign**. Disney sells autograph books at almost every store. My wife, who enjoys scrapbooking, took a small spiral bound card stock book and Sharpie markers for them to sign with. Your PassPorter also includes several pages for autographs. Keep in mind, some characters wear very large gloves or some may not be able to sign at all. Keep a thick marker with you as these are easier for the characters to hold. If the characters cannot sign, they often have a rubber stamp they can use.

So you've waited in line, and it is finally your turn with the character. Most everyone will send his or her kids up to ask for an autograph. Be sure to **have your camera ready**. Some of the best photos I have ever seen are taken during the moments before the "big pose," when they first get to see their favorite star. This is when you will get the best

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smiles and the most candid photos. Your child does not have to be facing the camera to get a great picture. Be sure to get a picture of the big hug, which they will talk about long after you are home.

Now, to make this few minutes even more memorable, be sure to **let your children talk to the characters**. You will see most parents send the child up, they get the autograph, turn for the picture and then the parents say "Let's go!" Instead, take a minute and have them or even you, ask some questions. You will get some great reactions! Ask Minnie why Mickey has not married her yet. Tell Donald that you think Mickey is number 1. Don't be scared to say "Tick, tock, tick, tock" around Captain Hook. Be sure to ask Belle what her favorite book is. You will be amazed at what some of the reactions or answers will be! You will create memories that will last a lifetime.

Our son **loved talking to the Disney princesses** and interacting with them. He took his Beauty and the Beast book for Belle to read to him. He would wait in line, and then when it was his turn he would let her read a page. After that, he would go to the back of the line and wait his turn for her to read another page. We have a ton of pictures of Belle reading with him. He still talks about it a year after it happened!

Another way to get a great character interaction is to **take advantage of a Character Meal**. There are many different locations and types of meals to choose from -- breakfast, lunch, dinner, even an ice cream social. Check out the Walt Disney World web site for information and call 407-WDW-DINE to make reservations. These meals let you enjoy some great food, and the Characters will come to your table and interact with you and your family.

To sum it up, **do a little work before you go and let the kids talk and play with all the Disney characters you see**. While you are waiting, be sure to get your autograph book, pens, markers and cameras ready for the moment that is about to happen. Take lots of pictures and be sure to get all the autographs you can. Long after the vacation you will be able to look back and say, "That is Junior with Suzy and Perla!" (the two mice I mentioned at the beginning of the article, who made Cinderella's gown)!

[Check out *PassPorter's Character Yearbook: Finding, Meeting, Photographing, and Autographing Our Disney Friends at Walt Disney World, Disneyland, and the Disney Cruise* e-book, with 266 pages of Disney character tips, information, and locations.](#)

About The Author: Terry is the father of two - a 6 year old son whose eyes "light up" when talking with a Disney Princess, and a 17 year old daughter.

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Terry describes himself as "obsessed with Disney!"

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