# Tips for Managing a Group of Kids

Kids are fun, and kids have energy! Whether you are a team leader, a classroom teacher, or an assistant, be prepared to confidently lead them using the following strategies.

## Attention Getters

**Call and Response**—Teach the kids that when a teacher says something, they should reply with something else. Practice the following ideas so kids know your expectations for responding:

**Teacher:** I spy
**Kids:** With my little eye

**Teacher:** Mission
**Kids:** Possible

**Teacher:** Crisscross (as they sit and cross legs)
**Kids:** Spy boss

**Teacher:** Jesus loves me
**Kids:** This I know
**Teacher:** For the Bible
**Kids:** Tells me so

**Teacher:** God is good
**Kids:** All the time
**Teacher:** And all the time
**Kids:** God is good

**If You're Listening**—Say, "If you're listening, put your hands on your head. If you're listening, stomp your foot," and so on. See how fast everyone catches on!

**Rhythm Claps**—The teacher claps a little rhythm, and the kids try to clap the exact rhythm back. Vary the clapping patterns.

**Countdown**—Hold up five fingers and start to count down from five to one. By the count of one, kids should be completely quiet.

**Soft Talk**—Start talking about something important very softly or in a whisper. Kids will often get quiet to hear what you are saying. Or say, "If you can hear me, clap once." Continue softly with other commands.

**Flash the Lights**—This is a good signal to listen up.

## Lining Up and Walking Through the Building

**If You**—Say different categories for lining up in fun ways, such as the following:

- "If you are wearing black like an undercover agent, line up. Now, if you're wearing red, line up."
- "If your birthday is during the summer, line up. Now, if your birthday is during the school year, line up."
- "If you have a dog, line up. Now, if you have a cat, line up. Now, if you have no pets, line up."
- "If you are quiet, line up."

**Let's Be**—When you are leaving a room, encourage good behavior in the hallway by making a game out of it. This works well with younger kids.

- "Let's be sneaky spies and walk as quietly as we can."
- "Let's be robots. No talking—just stiff movements."

## Proactive Tips

**Be Prepared**—One of the best ways to ward off discipline problems is to be prepared. Think through and organize your day, leaving no downtime. Keep things moving! This takes more effort on your part, but it's worth it.

**Active Participation**—Keeping kids actively engaged in the lesson is perhaps the best thing you can do to keep the class from getting rowdy. The lessons are written to be creative, fun, and full of active participation. Play the games, act out the Bible accounts, and do the other ideas listed. Occupy kids' minds and attention with good stuff!

**Helpers**—Involve the kids. Let them be helpers; some kids just want to feel needed. Give them small responsibilities to show you trust them. Try putting them in charge of simple tasks, such as helping others learn memory verses, passing out papers, or holding a poster for the teacher. Sometimes a task can keep them busy and make them feel important!

**Use Humor**—Kids of all ages love to laugh! Have fun together. If you see a situation is getting tense or a child is getting upset for some reason, try thinking of a way to lighten the mood with humor.

## Calming Rowdiness

**Don't Yell**—Kids may respond at first if someone yells, but they eventually dismiss it. Try some of these other ideas instead.

**Separate Kids**—Separate kids who misbehave around each other, but also encourage problem-solving when possible. "What are some things we could do to help you and ___ get along?"

**Give Choices**—Avoid power struggles by giving choices. If a child is resistant to doing something you've asked, try your command another way. "You can either sit with the


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rest of the group and listen to the teacher or sit with ___ (leader's name) at the back of the room."

**Praise in Public, Correct in Private**—If someone does need correction, be careful not to embarrass him in front of his peers. If you need to talk to a child about a misbehavior, pull him aside at a time when the rest of the group is distracted. Kids will be less defensive if they don't feel they have to "save face" in front of their peers and if they feel you really care and aren't just coming down on them.

**Know Church Policies**—Know your church's policy for severe behavior issues. Do you take the child to your VBS director? Do you alert the child's parents? Do you involve other staff members? Be prepared.

## Additional Suggestions to Share with Your Leaders

**Pray**—Some kids may never have had anyone pray for them. Pray not only about behavior situations but also about their eternal souls.

**Notice the Good**—Sometimes a poor behavior is an attention-seeking device. Be proactive and give attention to those children so they don't feel the need to act out negatively. Negative behaviors can be a cry for love and attention.

**Distraction**—When young kids are dropped off or start to cry, distracting them is a good technique to try. Ask them to tell you about something on their clothes ("Oh, what's that on your T-shirt?"), get them talking about some of their favorites, or show them an intriguing toy or puppet.

**Keep Them Busy**—If there is any downtime (while waiting for the next rotation to begin or if craft time ends a few minutes early, etc.), fill it with something productive! Use the time to practice team cheers, ask questions, or go over memory verses in fun ways (such as making up motions or saying them as a rap). You may also want to play a quick game, like one of the following:

- **Stone Face**—Have a competition to see which child can hold a frown the longest without cracking a smile.
- **I Spy**—Look for various things to spy.
- **Simon Says**—Simon can say Bible-themed things, like read your Bible (hands in front of you making a book), pray (praying hands), share the gospel (cup hands around mouth), go to church (make a church with a steeple out of your interlocked hands), etc.
- **Quiet Mouse**—Have a competition to see who is the quietest in line.
- **Follow the Leader**—Play the normal version or an international spy version with actions, such as the following:
  - Look left and right like a spy.
  - Look over your shoulder like a secret agent.
  - Whisper like an operative.
  - Put on a disguise like a spy.
  - Glide like a sugar glider.
  - Wiggle like an octopus.
  - Swim like a sea lion.
  - Oink like a pig.
  - Fly like a pigeon.


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