



TIPS FOR MANAGING A GROUP OF KIDS

Kids are fun, and kids have energy! Prepare 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:** Gotta go
Kids: Buffalo
- **Teacher:** Better shake
Kids: Rattlesnake
- **Teacher:** Chugga, chugga, chugga, chugga
Kids: Choo choo
- **Teacher:** Crisscross (as they sit and cross legs)
Kids: Big trail boss
- **Teacher:** Jesus loves me
Kids: This I know
Teacher: For the Bible
Kids: Tells me so

Train's a Comin'—Make the sound of an oncoming train. Start softly and slowly with the sound (chugga-chugga-choo-choo) while making circles with your arms as wheels. Gradually get louder and faster as the train approaches, then reverse the motions and sounds to finish with everyone sitting quietly.

Horse Gallop—Check online for how to use finger snaps and claps to make it sound like a horse galloping. Begin slowly, then speed up.

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

Countdown—Hold up five fingers and 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 quiet down 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 to Walk Through the Building

If You . . .—For lining up, call out fun categories, such as the following:

- "If you are wearing green like a cactus, line up. Now, if you're wearing brown like a grizzly bear, 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."

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, so giving them a responsibility is a way to show you trust them. Try putting them in charge of a simple task, such as helping others learn memory verses, passing out papers, or holding a poster for the teacher. Sometimes a simple 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 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 rest of the group and listen 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 while 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.