

VBS 2023 BACKYARD KIDS CLUB CONFERENCE PLAN (1½ HOURS)

Purpose Statement

This 90-minute conference plan is designed to train and equip VBS directors and kid's ministry volunteers to plan a successful Twists & Turns Backyard Kids Club.

Needed Resources

- *VBS 2023 Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide*
- *VBS 2023 Backyard Kids Club Kit*
- *VBS 2023 Music for Kids CD*
- *VBS 2023 Parent Guide* (1 per conferee)
- *VBS 2023 Gospel Guide* (1 per conferee)
- *VBS 2023 String Flags*
- *VBS 2023 Tablecloths*
- Optional: *VBS 2023 Giant Inflatable Game Cube*
- Optional: *VBS 2023 Visual Pack*
- Optional: *VBS 2023 Craft Packs*
- Gather items to simulate an outdoor setting (such as artificial trees/plants), cooler, blanket
- Item 1: "Game Cube Inserts" — Print on cardstock and insert in the pockets of the *Giant Inflatable Game Cube*. (Use with Teaching Step 1.)
- Item 2: "Video Game Piece" — Photocopy 16 copies onto cardstock. Cut out the shape. Laminate for multiple uses. (Use with Teaching Step 2.)
- Item 3: "Leader Signs" — Print onto cardstock and laminate for multiple uses. Place signs around the room with the corresponding Backyard Kids Club Kit folders.
- Item 4: "Letter Tiles" — Print on cardstock. Cut out each letter tile and write the following on the backs. Hide the letter tiles around the room.
 - S: *social media, direct links to registration on church website, QR codes*
 - H: *hand out fliers in BKC neighborhood*
 - A: *apartments and common areas receive fliers/posters*
 - R: *remind previous VBS attenders with postcards listing BKC locations*
 - E: *Enlist kids in getting the word out. Kids respond best to other kids.*
- Item 5: "Handout" — Print 1 per conferee.
- Black tri-fold project board — Draw a simple Pac Man® style maze, including power pills.
- *Optional*: Samples of each craft — Prepare any crafts you'd like to display in advance.

Room Setup

Arrange chairs in a semi-circle. Drape *VBS 2023 String Flags* across the doorway. Cover the focal wall with a *VBS 2023 Visual Pack* items. Cover a table with a *VBS 2023 Tablecloth* and display curriculum with other outdoor decorations. Place the handout and items to be distributed on the table.

Teaching Steps

1. **Welcome** (2 minutes)
 - Welcome conferees. Share your experience with Backyard Kids Club and ask those attending to share their experience.
 - Ask if anyone has ever played the game "20 Questions." Comment: "We will be asking many questions today to help each of us understand the importance of Backyard Kids Club and how to make it work in your situation. So, let's get started!"

- Explain that this year's theme is *Twists and Turns*. It is a fantastical celebration of games of all kinds. From classic tabletop games to video games and more, kids will play their way through BKC while learning that Jesus guides them through all the twists and turns of their lives. They'll find that even when they mess up it's never "game over."
2. **Question 1: Why do BKC?** (5 minutes)
- Share with conferees that Backyard Kids Club (BKC) is a way of expanding VBS to your community—going beyond the church walls to share the gospel!
 - Ask: "Why might your church benefit from using BKC?"
 - Invite a volunteer to roll the Giant Inflatable Game Cube and have a conferee roll the cube, remove the paper from the top pocket, and read the information with the group.
 - Continue with other volunteers until all answers have been shared.
 - Mention that research shows that 69% of all American parents would encourage their child to attend VBS at a church they don't attend if invited by a friend. When kids invite their neighborhood friends to BKC at their home, parents are overwhelmingly likely to say yes.
3. **Question 2: Where can you hold a BKC?** (6 minutes)
- Remind conferees that Matthew 28:19–20 says to Go and make disciples of all nations ... not stay in the church and let them come to you! Mention that the VBS Scripture for Twists & Turns is Psalm 25:4: "Make your ways known to me, LORD; teach me your paths."
 - Say: "Everyone needs to know God's ways for their life. How to know Him, hear Him, and follow Him."
 - Comment: "It has become readily apparent over the past several years that going outside the church walls will be imperative if we are to win this generation and the next to Jesus. Backyard Kids Club is not limited to the backyard. Let's think for just the next few minutes about locations we might use for BKC."
 - Guide conferees to look for the video game pieces under their chairs. Lead them to name a place where BKC could take place and place their piece somewhere on the Pac Man maze. (Write their answers on each piece before adding it to the maze, if desired.)
 - Answers might include:
 - Park
 - Church members' homes
 - Mission trip
 - Mission project
 - HOA clubhouse
 - Recreation center
 - Church
 - Parking lot
 - Restaurant
 - Daycare center
 - School
 - Neighborhood pool
 - Mobile home park
 - Government housing
 - Collaborate with another church
 - Others suggested by conferees
4. **Question 3: How do you use BKC?** (35 minutes)

- Explain that a successful Backyard Kids Club begins with two key pieces—the *Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide* and the *Backyard Kids Club Kit*. Each church needs only ONE Directors Guide, even if hosting multiple BKC locations. Each location will need its own Backyard Kids Club Kit.
- Explain that the Twists & Turns Backyard Kids Club resources follow the same biblical outline as the traditional VBS resources.
- Note that the previous three years of themes are also available. Explain that churches will need to get the BKC Kit that matches the theme they want to use, but there is only one Directors Guide and it is applicable to all themes.

Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide:

- Show the *Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide* and walk through the key features:
 - Page 4: One-page summary of the 2023 biblical content
 - Pages 6–8: Identify Locations/Timing
 - Point to the list of potential locations generated by the conferees. Suggest they choose one or two to pursue as locations for their BKC this summer.
- Ask **question 4, “Will we use all 5 days or abbreviated schedule?”** then answer it by continuing to look in the Directors Guide:
 - Organize Your Teams
 - Page 10: Role summaries (We’ll cover more of this in just a moment.)
 - Plan, Prepare, Promote
 - Sample schedules
 - Planning checklist
 - Registration tips
 - Continue the Connection
- Overview the printable PDFs for additional training and preparation which include:
 - Clip art
 - Role summaries
 - Sample registration forms
 - Family connection ideas
 - Follow-up prospect cards
 - Prayer calendar
 - Age characteristics
 - Promotional flyer
 - And more!

Backyard Kids Club Kit:

- Overview the contents of the *Backyard Kids Club Kit*.
- Invite conferees to move with you to each Leader Sign (Item 3) around the room. Hold up the folder and resources found there and talk about them thoroughly. Continue until each item is discussed.
- Explain that each folder in the Kit corresponds with a different role.
 - **Host/Team Leader:** Provides the location and leadership for the BKC. (Show the Host folder.) The host also provides the snacks. (Show the *VBS 2023 Snack Rotation Recipe Cards* included in the BKC kit.)
 - Explain that the Host/Team Leader is the on-site director. Ideally the host does not have any teaching responsibilities, so he/she is available for any needs that arise. Hosts work with the team to set the date, schedule, and any kickoff or celebration dates.

- Show the top of the first page in the folder and review the difference between a host and a team leader. Explain that the host can also be the team leader, or the team leader can be another person on the BKC team.
- Mention that the host must have the gift of hospitality—making people feel welcome and loved. Someone who cares more about her flowerbeds than kids is not a good host choice. Whenever possible, recruit hosts that are open to a 2–3-year commitment. It takes time to develop relationships. In some cases, it may take families 2–3 years of participating in a BKC before making a visit to the host church.
- Main duties: Publicity, registration, snacks, security, follow-up, communicating details back to the church staff. (NOTE: Publicity and follow-up will be addressed in further detail at the end of the training.)
- Draw attention to page 11 of the Directors Guide for great tips regarding important safety information.
- **Snacks (Host):** Snacks are usually the responsibility of the host. Plan for snacks to last 10 minutes.
 - Keep in mind that many children have food allergies. Plan for allergen-free snacks (or alternatives).
 - Consider only serving water since BKC is usually outside. Watch for warning signs that children are overheated or dehydrated.
 - Be sure to think through trash pickup. Tie a large bag to a tree or bring a large trashcan outside.
 - Involve the church at large by asking other church members to provide snacks for the teams. Adults who may not be able to participate the week of BKC might love to shop, prepare, and deliver snacks to the host ahead of time.
 - Remember to take every opportunity to teach. Snack time is a great time to review the Bible Stories and/or applications from Bible Study.
- **Music/Worship Leader:** Leads Opening Rally for 15 minutes and leads Closing Rally for 15 minutes. (Show Music Folder, CDs, and Choreography DVD.)
 - Explain that the Music Folder gives an outline for daily opening and closing rallies. A two-character skit is also provided. This helps tie in the theme each day and sets up Bible study. Consider asking older children or middle school/high school students to perform the skits.
 - Choose leaders with high levels of enthusiasm and energy. The music/worship leader should be familiar enough with the songs and movements to teach them to the children each day.
 - If technology is available at a BKC site, the music/worship leader may choose to show the performance videos on the DVD while leading songs.
 - During Closing Rally, review the music from Opening Rally, the motto, and the memory verse. Use the Connection Questions included on the Closing Rally card to review the lesson. This can have a huge impact. Often parents arrive a little early. By reviewing everything at the end, parents can listen in on what their children learned. Parents who are already believers can continue the conversation with their child as they go home. Parents who are not believers will hopefully ask their children to explain what they learned!

- **Bible Study Leaders:** Leads Bible Study for 30 minutes. Recruit Bible Study leaders for both preschool and children's Bible studies. (Show the Preschool and Children's Bible Study folders.)
 - Explain that the daily Bible stories and applications are the same for BKC as the main VBS curriculum. Activities and games have been adapted to fit a broadly graded group of children and are easily portable and done outside.
 - Pull out the Day 1 teaching plans for both children and preschool. Show that they are the same Bible story, but use different activities based on comprehension levels and capabilities.
 - Point out that the Preschool teaching plan includes an abbreviated Bible verse (paraphrase) and coloring sheet option on the back. There is also a separate preschool music CD with songs that are incorporated into the lesson.
 - Mention that the children's teaching plans have an "Explore Deeper" activity (usually a game or craft option) to extend the time if needed.
 - Show the kit items (teaching pictures) and activity books (learner pieces) for both preschool and children.
 - Share the following tips for Bible Study:
 - Think through sun versus shade. You do not want kids staring into the sun as they look at the leader.
 - Provide clear physical boundaries. A flat sheet or blanket not only gives them something to sit on but also provides a visual boundary.
 - Provide a cooler for the leader to sit on. Store supplies inside to prevent them from blowing away (other options include a large box, basket, or bag nearby).
 - Ask other team members (Music, Rec, Crafts, etc.) to sit with the children during Bible Study time to assist the Bible Study leader and to help the children stay focused.
 - Be spiritually and mentally prepared for distractions. Do not be surprised if a neighbor decides to mow the lawn or a hot air balloon goes overhead during Bible Study time.
- **Recreation Leader:** Leads recreation for 25 minutes. Determines early arrival activities 15–20 minutes before starting BKC. (Show the preschool and children's recreation rotation leader cards included in the BKC kit. Explain that the recreation cards for BKC are identical to the cards for VBS.)
 - Instruct leaders to be very familiar with the playing area. Watch for tree roots, little ditches, or other items that might be hazardous or cause safety concerns.
 - Give very clear boundaries on how far kids may go during games. Consider stationing extra adults or student leaders at those boundaries.
 - Determine in advance with the BKC team if recreation can include water or messy games.
 - Select 3–4 games per day. It is better to have more prepared to fill extra time.
 - Share the following tips for BKC recreation:
 - End a game before the kids lose interest. You can always bring it back as an opening or closing game during drop off/pick up the next day.

- Evenly disperse younger and older children on each team when forming teams with broadly graded ages. For relay games, place the youngest children at the front of the line and older children at the back. This will help ensure that kids compete against others their own age.
 - Give teams theme related names such as “Twisters” and “Turn Abouts” instead of calling them “Team 1” and “Team 2.”
 - **Craft Leader:** Leads crafts for 25 minutes. (Show the Craft folder, the sample craft packs, and the VBS 2023 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide.)
 - Explain that the BKC crafts are chosen for their suitability for outdoor use. Additional craft ideas are available in the *VBS 2023 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide*.
 - Mention that Lifeway craft packs are great options because they come in kits that are easy to distribute.
 - Share the following tips for BKC Crafts:
 - Lead kids to stand around tables instead of sitting in chairs. (12 kids can stand around a table where only 6 chairs would fit.)
 - Plan ahead for wind! Place small items/crayons/markers in heavier bowls or cups to keep them from blowing away or rolling off the table.
 - Provide a bucket of soapy water and a towel nearby if doing a messy craft. This will give children a place to clean their hands rather than needing to go inside to find a sink.
 - Keep extra copies of the preschool Bible Study coloring pages on hand for children who finish early. Or have the Recreation Leader to stand-by ready to play a favorite game again as kids finish their craft.
 - Lead kids to place their finished craft near the pick-up area so they do not forget them when they leave.
5. **Question 5: Are there any challenges to doing BKC?** (20 minutes)
- Explain that there are certain challenges to putting on a Backyard Kids Club. But if they can be identified now, a solution can be put in place to minimize (or eliminate) them. Talk through the following challenges with conferees and invite them to contribute their ideas for overcoming the challenges.
 - Over-stretching the first year — Start with a single site and expand at a comfortable rate.
 - Flexibility — Have a plan in place, but be prepared with options in additional children attend, weather changes, age groupings are lop-sided, etc.
 - Burn out — BKC is a great option where fewer volunteers can make a huge difference.
 - Registration — Sometimes children just “show up.” Enlist a volunteer to be in charge of connecting with the parents, older siblings, or neighbors who bring children so good information for follow up is gathered.
 - Hands-on rotations — Organize and pre-package materials to make distribution go smoothly. Rotations should be explained so kids will know just what they are expected to do. Identify areas clearly so kids will know where to go. Volunteers can wear similar shirts or name tags so kids will know who to follow.
 - Social distancing / large groups

- Inclusion — Know the characteristics of different ages to know what is typical behavior and abilities.
 - Adjust plans to accommodate children who need adaptations so that everyone can be involved.
 - If needed, enlist a one-on-one buddy to help children with special needs.
 - Mix younger and older children in groups. Older children can help the younger one's complete tasks. Working with younger children can keep the older ones focused on positive activities.
- Discipline — Explain expectations and guidelines children must follow to avoid discipline issues. Give examples such as: "We show respect for one another when we keep our hands to ourselves and listen when others are speaking."
- Recruitment — Volunteers can be drawn from host families, neighbors, and co-workers; in addition to church family.
- Expanding needs — New volunteers could be drawn in to BKC with the expanding needs for media, social media, sanitizing or health check stations, and other new areas.

6. Question 6: How do we tell everyone about BKC? (10 minutes)

- Direct conferees to pages 32–35 of the Directors Guide and pages 7–9 in the Host folder for great ideas on spreading the word about BKC.
- Ask attendees to share with the group some creative and successful ways they have handled publicity for their BKC.
- Invite five volunteers to look around the room for the Scrabble Letters (Item 4) and share what is written on the back of the letters.
 - S – social media, direct links to registration on church website, QR codes.
 - H – hand out fliers in BKC neighborhood
 - A – apartments and common areas receive fliers/posters
 - R – remind previous VBS attenders with postcards listing BKC locations
 - E – Enlist kids in getting the word out. Kids respond best to other kids.
- Mention that traditional promotion methods such as posters, banners and yard signs can be effective too. Know what is permitted for the location where you will be hosting BKC and follow all community guidelines.

7. Question 7: What is your follow-up plan? (10 minutes)

- Direct conferees to pages 36–44 in the Directors Guide and Host folder pages 8 and 10–12 for great ideas on registration and follow up.
- Emphasize that follow up begins with good record keeping during the registration process. Depending on the setting, it can be easy to miss a parent at registration or fail to get complete information. The host may know the family and think they will capture the information later, but if complete information is not gathered, the church will have a difficult time reaching out to the family after BKC.
- Remind host/team leaders of the importance of turning in registration information in a timely manner. Following up with families needs to happen quickly after BKC.
- Ask attendees to share their own creative and successful follow-up strategies from VBS or BKC with the group. If not mentioned by the group, be sure to share:
 - Phone call from a BKC team member who worked with the child
 - Postcard from a BKC team member who worked with the child
 - Front porch visit from a team member with additional information about the church or delivering a photo from BKC as a keepsake for the child
 - Letter from the church

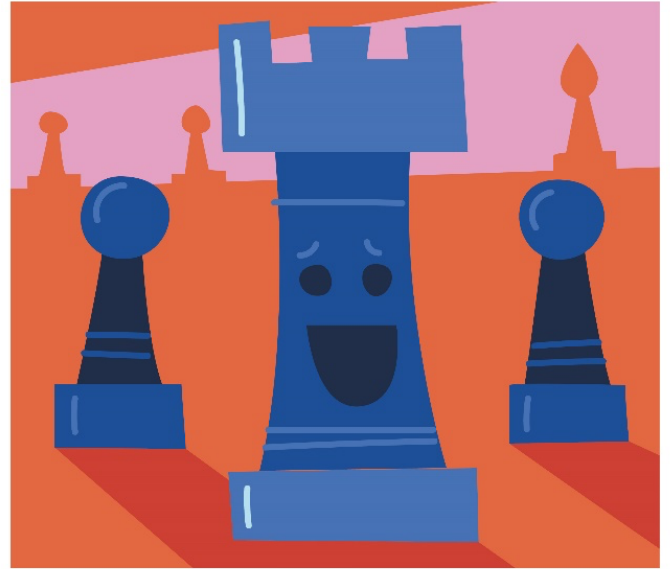
- Email from the church
- Phone call from a children's leader at the church representing the age of the child that attended (Children's Minister, Sunday School teachers, etc.)
- Invitation to an end of summer BKC celebration at the church
- Invitation to a school or fall kickoff party at the church
- A follow-up event during the year in the same location as their BKC. Families are more likely to continue the relationship with the BKC team than they are to visit a church full of strangers.

8. **Closing** (2 minutes)

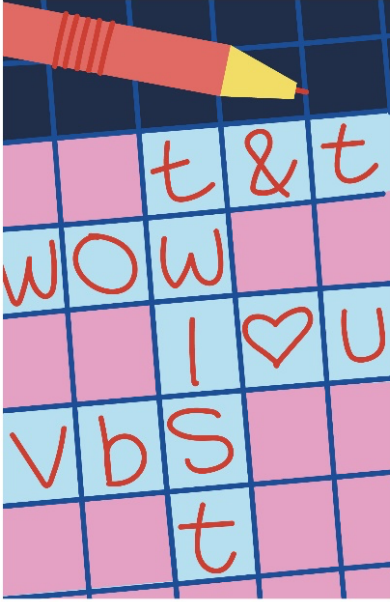
- Thank attendees for coming and acknowledge that this was a lot of information to cover.
- Remind them each BKC is just like a mini-VBS. What they learn from VBS can help in BKC, and what they learn in BKC can help in VBS.
- Pray for the attendees and their BKC's. Pray that God would impress on them the places He wants to send them and that He would already be working to provide the people needed to make it happen.

BKC BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS AND CREATES LASTING MEMORIES



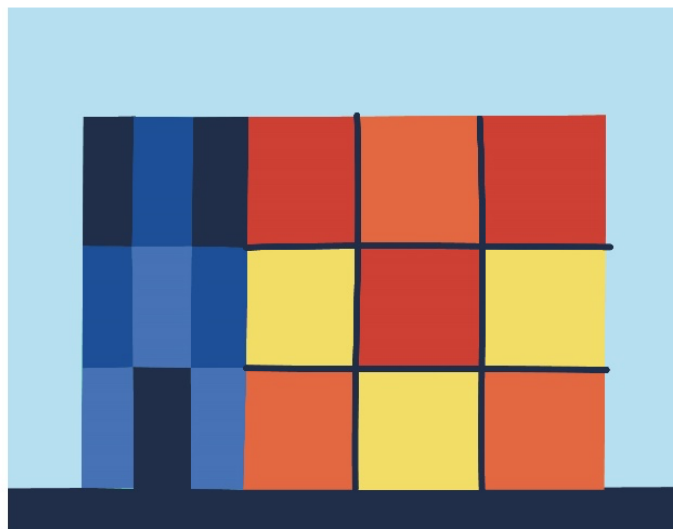


**BKC IS CUSTOMIZABLE
AND TOTALLY
MANAGEABLE**



**BKC GETS PEOPLE
INVOLVED IN
SERVING WHO
MIGHT NOT
OTHERWISE SERVE**

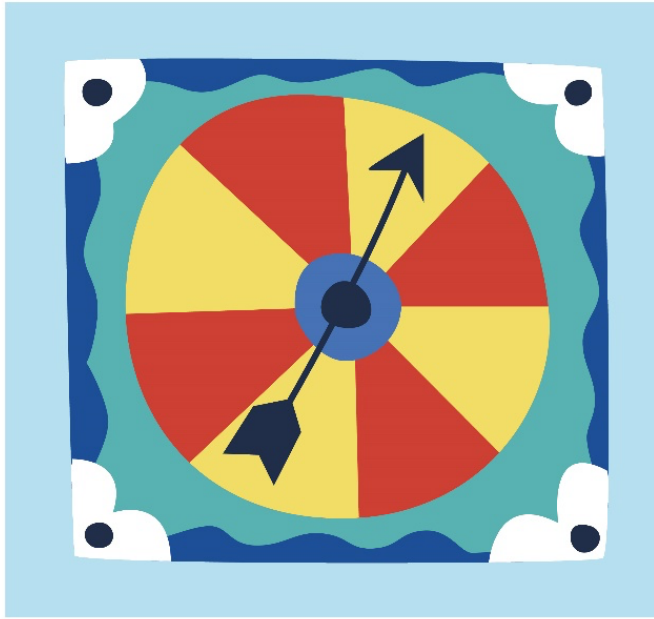
INVITING FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS TO BKC IS SUCCESSFUL



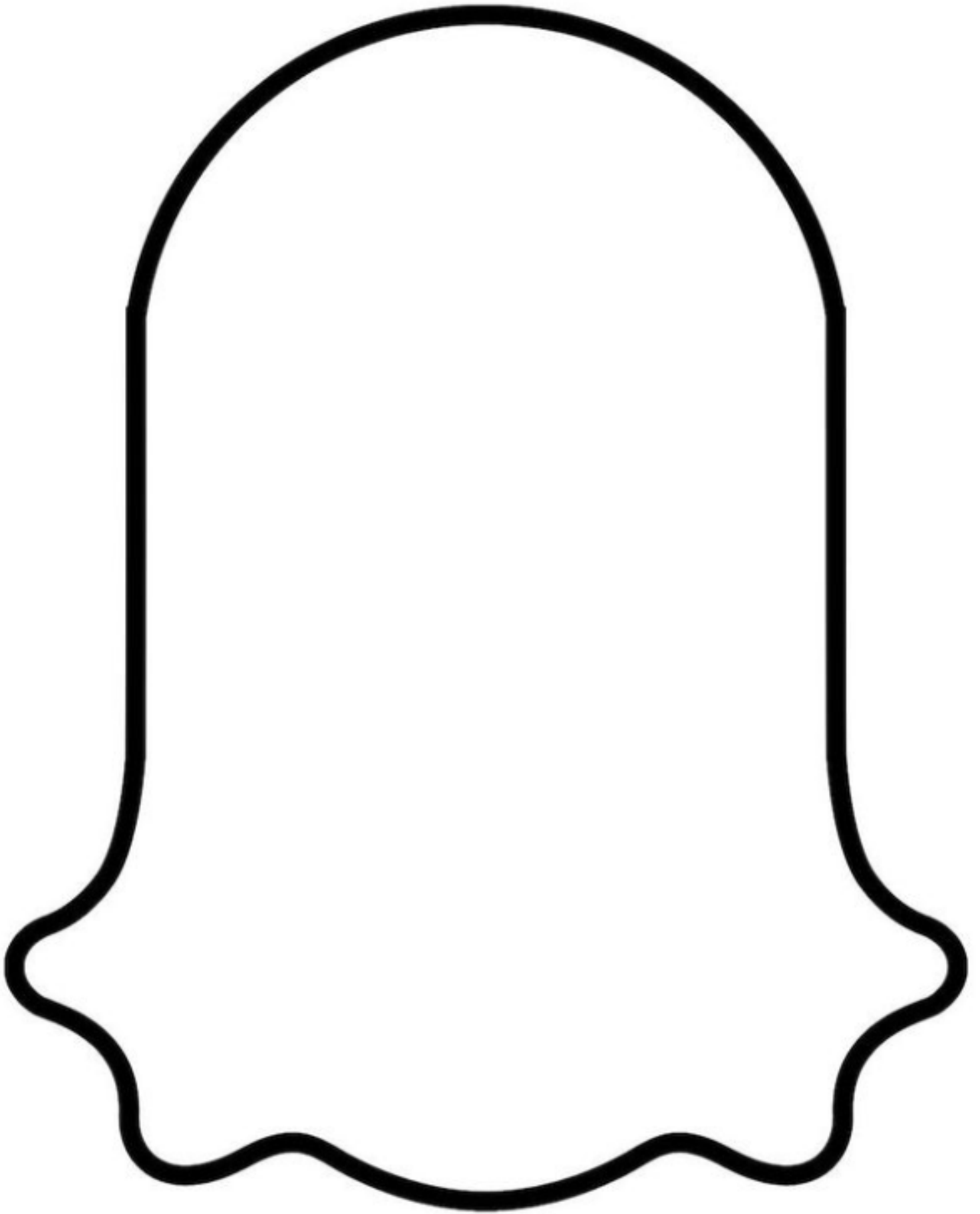
Item 1. Game Cube Inserts

BKC MEETS PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE





BKC BRINGS THE CHURCH TO THE COMMUNITY



Item 2. Video Game Piece



Host /
Team Leader



Snacks (Host)



Music / Worship Leader



Bible Study Leaders



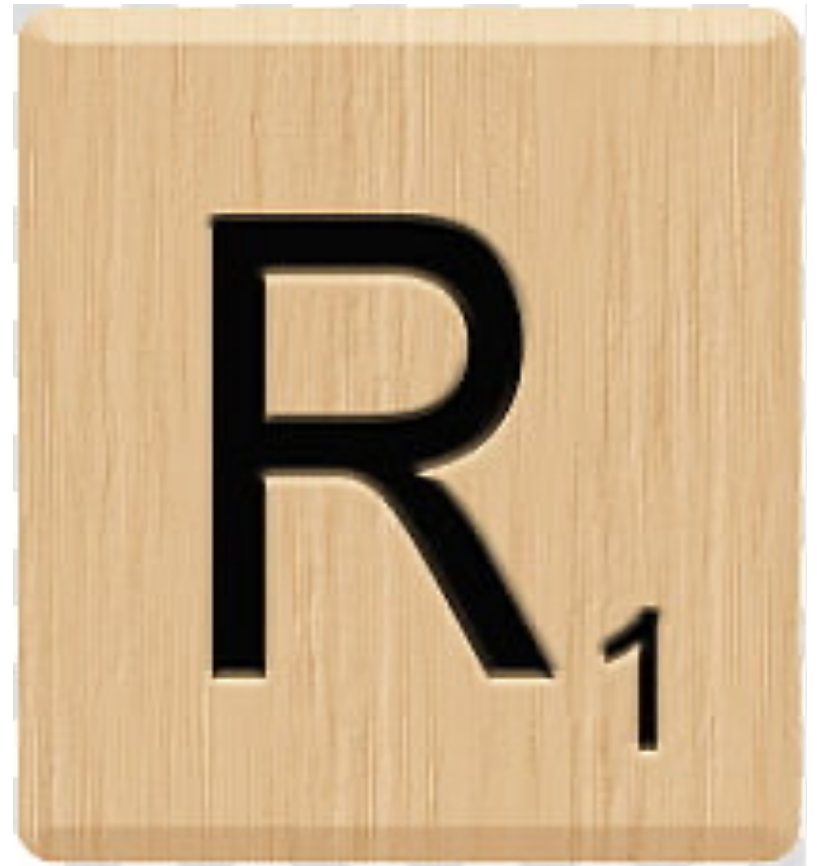
Recreation Leader



Craft Leader



Item 4. Letter Tiles



Item 4. Letter Tiles



Item 4. Letter Tiles

VBS 2023: Backyard Kids Club



Why hold BKC?

What are some new locations for BKC?

Team Responsibilities and Tips:

1. Host/Team Leader

2. Music/Worship

3. Bible Study

4. Recreation

5. Crafts

BKC Suggested Schedule

15–20 minutes: Early-arrival
games before BKC starts

15 minutes: Opening Rally

30 minutes: Bible Study

25 minutes: Recreation

10 minutes: Snacks

25 minutes: Crafts

15 minutes: Closing Rally

Publicity and Promotion Ideas:

Follow Up Ideas:

What challenges are there in doing BKC?