

MAKE VBS GREAT FOR ALL KIDS

Your VBS is filled with kids—kids with different abilities, kids who've never been to church, kids who come maybe 3–4 times a year, and of course, kids you see every Sunday! With such a wide array of kids, the challenge is how to make sure that all kids feel welcomed and engaged. Here are a few ways to do just that!

NEW KIDS AT VBS

- **Play name games.** Every day. Hearing that someone knows his name can help a new kid feel at ease. Helping him make friends who also know his name—even better.
- **Explain expectations.** Take time to talk about what the day will look like, what rotations kids will go to, or how they will be moving around campus.
- **Be patient with kids who don't know “church” rules,** such as staying quiet while someone is praying, focusing during Bible story time, following safety guidelines, and so forth.
- **Don't embarrass any child.** Speak one-on-one when guidance is necessary. (For instance: instead of calling inappropriate language “bad words,” just remind kids that “we don't say those words here.”)
- **Stay away from “church-ese.”** Speak their language. Define church words often. Some won't know who Jesus is; what sin is; what it means to be born again; or what it means to be baptized.
- **Teach Bible skills** as if no one has ever heard them so a child doesn't feel like the odd one out. This is especially true for older kids. Many will not know how to find a specific Bible book or verse. Some may not even truly know what a Bible is.
- **Remind kids of details.** Take time daily to remind kids of what was learned during previous sessions. This will help new kids as well as those who might struggle with remembering from day to day.

KIDS WITH DIFFERENT ABILITIES

Make environmental changes so that those with special needs are able to complete the task.

- Move floor activities to a tabletop so kids with mobility issues or in wheelchairs can more easily participate.
- Increase the font size of handouts or posters to improve visibility for those with vision limitations.

- Use a clear color contrast for print such as a black background with white print or a white background with black print.
- Adapt activities to allow students the opportunity to participate with a level of achievement.
- Provide pool noodles to extend reach for kids with limited mobility to reach things like posters on the wall (point to the ____) or to use in simple tag games like Duck, Duck, Goose.
- Offer options that would include the child such as being the timekeeper or scorekeeper.
- Provide a large clip (like a chip bag clip) to aid in holding cards.

Modify content for the students.

- Provide a visual schedule (icons or pictures to represent the day's sequence of events). Hang this on the focal wall or another easily visible location.
- Use picture cues whenever possible for learning and review.

Provide a buddy for a student who requires assistance because of a disability.

- A buddy can assist one-on-one with the student.
- A buddy can monitor safety at all times for the student.
- A buddy can reteach or redirect during a Bible story or activity.
- A buddy can make accommodations to the environment for the student as needed (such as moving chairs out of the way for a wheelchair to have table access).