

# WHAT'S A CREW LEADER?

If you're a Crew Leader, you've met two important qualifications: you love the Lord, and you love children. During the week, you'll visit different activities with a group of 5-10 children. You'll have two Crew Times you'll use to discuss the lesson, memory verse, and Gospel Truth. Other than that, you're a shepherd for the week, guiding kids and helping them enjoy the activities. Because you have a small group, you'll get to know and affirm each member by asking questions, listening, and encouraging.



## PRAYING FOR YOUR MULTI-AGE KIDS

- Praise God for this opportunity to teach kids the good news about Jesus.
- Pray that God will give you insights about what the kids in your group need.
- Ask God to help your kids pay attention despite the possible distractions of having different age groups in the same space.
- Pray that God will help you explain difficult concepts to young kids and kids who are new to church.
- Ask for specific connection points with each child in your class.
- If you have received a list of kids who pre-registered, pray for them each by name. Pray also for the kids whose names you don't know yet but God knows.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will stir kids' hearts as they hear the gospel. Pray that ill draw kids to Himself.

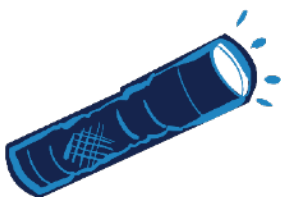
## THE CREW FAMILY

Every member of your mixed-age crew adds something to every activity.

**Kindergarteners** are full of imagination and can really help others find their spirit of wonder and adventure.

**First graders** may be competitive and certainly notice competition. They can encourage the crew to be the best it can be.

**Second graders** are especially keen on fairness. They can encourage everyone to be patient and take turns.



**Third graders** like to be challenged and can come alongside younger members to support them with challenging projects.

**Fourth graders** like to ask questions to make sure they understand what they're learning and enjoy making choices.

## MULTI-AGE GROUPS OF KIDS

Multi-age crews bring together a wider range of ages and developmental stages for Bible study. How do you make the most of that time so that the more advanced kids don't get bored and lose interest and the younger kids don't feel left out and lost? Here are a few tips that come from experienced leaders.

- \* Ask older kids to be your "assistants" and help the younger kids with games or activities. The older kids will be focused and learning right along with their younger peers.
- \* After discussions/instructions, break into smaller groups or pairs for activities. Group older kids together and younger kids together. Add a challenge to the older group's activity, and simplify the younger kids' activity.
- \* Be sure your helpers understand their roles prior to VBS. As you direct the crew, the helpers can assist with things like locating a Bible verse, finding supplies, or guiding kids to answer review or application questions. Remember to make sure no teacher or assistant is alone with kids.
- \* Crew Time Plans include tips to help you age activities up or down during your crew times. Your notebook also includes a section on adapting for physical and/or learning disabilities. Use these modifications to help you adapt as you get to know your kids and their interests and abilities.
- \* In a multi-age group of kids, older kids may not be the most knowledgeable when it comes to Bible skills or facts. Kids new to church may not know as much as the younger kids who are regular attenders. Older kids can be embarrassed by having a younger child help them, so some skills are best to teach as if the whole group is learning for the first time.
- \* Using a variety of teaching methods as we do through our rotations is very helpful when teaching a multi-age group. Kids will tend to gravitate toward others with similar interests, and when kids are interested in an activity, behavior is better and learning happens more effectively.
- \* Be flexible. This tip helps no matter what combination of ages you're teaching, but it is especially true with multi-age groups. If something isn't working, be prepared to move to the next thing. Always have a couple of things planned you might not use. And having a couple of "back pocket" ideas that would work anytime is a good idea.

## CREW JOBS

Though you don't have to assign jobs, if you do, you may never go back. Every day immediately after Morning Assembly, give each child a job. You may find that your crew works well together and everyone can choose their own jobs. But if children can't agree on who should perform which, assign jobs for Day 1 and then rotate after that so that each child has an opportunity to do several jobs. Encourage them to fulfill their roles, and provide lots of opportunities to do so. Feel free to add or change the ideas below, or ask the Director for suggestions.

- \* *Crew Guide* – chooses action ideas for traveling through the halls
- \* *Supplies Manager* – distributes and carries supplies throughout the day
- \* *Prayer Leader* – opens prayer times or prays for the missionaries of the week
- \* *Schedule Supervisor* – helps monitor the daily schedule to let the Crew Leader know what's next
- \* *Gratitude Guard* – leads the crew in thanking Station Leaders and other special helpers during the day



# TOP FOR CREW LEADER TIPS

## 1. Participate!

- \* Sing the songs...with the motions!
- \* Play the games at Recreation!
- \* Be curious at Wonder Workshop.
- \* Take mental notes at the Bible Lesson to refer to in your Crew Time.
- \* Notice kids' crafty details or solid dance moves.
- \* Sit or stand with your kids - not in the back or along the side.

## 2. Support the Station Leaders.

- \* Help your crew sit quickly and lock in to be ready for the station.
- \* Listen to each Station Leader, and encourage kids to listen, too.
- \* Put distracting items out of the way during activities.
- \* Be an enthusiastic participant and encourager!

## 3. Lavish your attention on the kids.

- \* Put your cell phone away for the morning. You won't miss much in just a few hours.
- \* Use kids' names in positive ways more often than you use it to correct.
- \* Use eye contact, on their level rather than looking down at them.
- \* Be a tuned-in, affirming listener during discussions. Paraphrase children's answers in a response back to them to show that you've heard and understand what they've said.
- \* Give hugs, high-fives, or your own signature tap throughout the day.
- \* Be there and ready for the kids when they arrive. Get there early!

## 4. Be positive.

- \* Model the behavior you want the kids to have.
- \* Positively acknowledge the children's answers to questions. Though saying something in direct contrast to Scripture must be gently but clearly corrected with a no, at other times a "no" isn't necessary. Rather than telling them, "No, that's not right" consider saying "Thank you for sharing. Does anyone else have thoughts?"
- \* Smile! Have fun! Focus more on your kids than anything else, and make it clear that you enjoy being with them.
- \*



### Positive phrases to help you redirect:

- \* Let's keep moving so we can do as many fun activities as possible!
- \* Listen carefully so you'll know what to do next.
- \* Stay with the crew – we need your help in this activity!
- \* That's a unique way of doing things! How did you think of that? Let's try this.
- \* It's important that we all follow the instructions and work together as a team.
- \* Please move over here so you can pay attention better.
- \* Let's all sit in a circle so we can see and hear one another better.
- \* Those things are sure cool! Let's keep them over here so they won't distract you or your friends while we're doing this activity.



# WHAT DO I DO AT EACH STATION?

**Opening Assembly** is where kids sing and get an introduction to the day through music, a skit, review, and the day's announcements. Your job there is to:

- greet your crew members in a designated seating area (and take attendance).
- follow the motions and sing out loud.
- help kids quiet down and hear the skit and Director.

**Wonder Workshop** is where kids experiment and discover with tangible ways to understand the Bible lesson and learn about God's world. You'll need to:

- listen carefully to instructions you may need to repeat for crew members.
- use your imagination and share your curiosity as kids explore.
- help kids complete activities when needed.
- help clean up your area before leaving.

**Recreation** is where kids play team-building games to review or build on their understanding of the day's lesson and/or God's creation. Your role at Rec is to:

- listen carefully to the instructions so you can help your crew members follow them.
- participate in the activities and cheer on the crew members as they participate.

## **MCM (Missions, Crafts, or Music)**

- On **Monday**, your crew will learn about our supported missionaries for the week, and how our collected offering can help them share Jesus with the World.
- On **Tuesday and Thursday**, kids will create special crafts to take home on Friday.
- On **Wednesday and Friday**, kids will sing, dance, and learn the moves to this year's VBS songs. They'll be thirsty when they're done!

*\*During these times, you and your helpers should take turns getting a break in the Oasis Room. Coordinate with your group so the Station Leaders have enough support.*

**Crew Times** is your turn to invest in your crew.

### **During the first crew time:**

- review names and group procedures.
- discuss the Bible lesson with provided questions.
- talk about the Gospel Truth and pray.

### **During the second crew time:**

- talk about the memory verse (of the day or the week's verse depending on your crew).
- practice looking up verses in the Bible.
- use motions to work on Scripture memory.



- play suggested Memory Verse review games.

**The Bible Lesson** is where kids will hear the Bible lesson from Scripture, presented in a unique way. You will:

- gather with your crew in the front of the sanctuary.
- listen carefully to be ready for review and discussion during your crew time.
- encourage your crew members to listen and participate.
- share your own discoveries during discussion times, and your excitement during the lesson.

**Closing Assembly** is when the children will experience an exciting review of the day's lesson. Your role at Closing Assembly is to:

- glad kids to their assigned seating area.
- participate in singing and other activities.
- encourage kids to participate without being disruptive.
- check children out according to policy and collect name tags as they're released.

**Take Note:**

Many stations will prompt thoughts and discussions with your crews about real life and some of the challenges we face. If a child brings up a serious issue, such as indicators of neglect, abuse, or violence he or she has experienced, say, "Thank you for telling me about that. It's very important, and we need to talk about it with our Director to give you a chance to say everything you need to say and help you with your feelings and anything else you need." Involve the appropriate staff person who can follow through with the necessary steps after the conversation, as there is not only a moral but a legal obligation to report circumstances where a child might be in danger.



## WHAT TO DO if...

*Most of the time, things will go smoothly, but every once in a while, you may run into a dilemma. Here's some advice on how to handle different challenges.*

### **If my crew gets too big...**

Our system is designed to work best with mixed age crews of around 5-8 children, but maybe your crew has welcomed a few more friends than that. If it feels too big, talk to the Director as soon as possible. Possibly we can give you an extra helper, maybe a new crew can be formed, or perhaps another crew has space for more children.

### **If not all my kids have Bibles...**

We have Bibles ready for you to give any kids who need them. Grab a Hallway Helper and they'll bring one right away.

### **If kids don't know how to find things in their Bibles...**

As is appropriate for the kids in your crew, mark verses ahead of time or assign older kids to help the younger ones. Help make reading Scripture a fun, rewarding experience and not a frustrating or embarrassing one to those who are new or need support.

### **If I have things to send home...**

Provide a container for each child at the start of the week, and then send that home on Friday. The container doesn't need to be fancy - paper grocery sacks can be perfect! On Friday, remind kids what you're sending and why you're sending it. Encourage kids to use these things, and share your joy in giving gifts to each child.

### **If my crew won't stay together...**

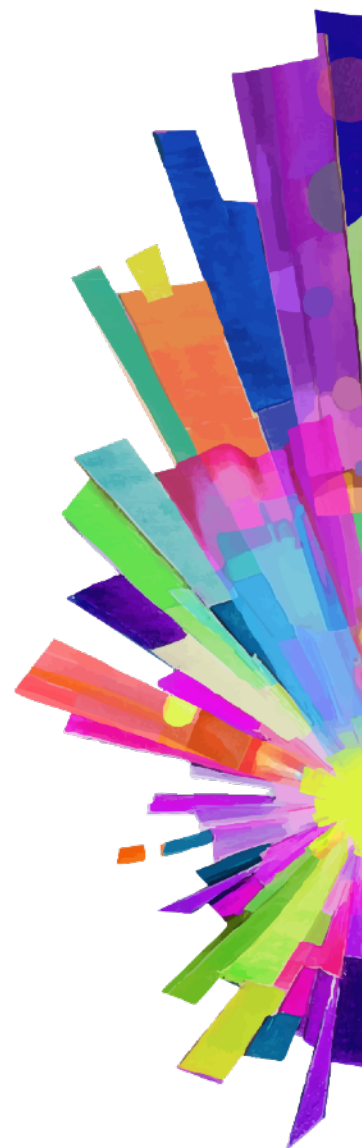
Encourage your Crew Guide to come up with creative ways to travel. Or work with your Thank You-er to come up with cheers to say as you travel.

### **If I have a clique in my crew...**

Encourage friendships among all Crew members by pairing kids with partners they don't know very well during games and other activities. Offer reminders when needed that they're all superstars and that means caring for each other and that no one is left out.

### **If older kids are unhappy being grouped with mixed ages...**

Highlight their helping role. Encourage them to help younger kids find bible passages and other activities. Acknowledge them by telling younger kids, "[Name of older child] is really good at that. Why don't you ask him [or her] to help?"



### **If a crew member won't participate...**

Help shy children feel welcome by calling them by name and asking them questions directly. Respond to their questions with a smile and a statement such as "That's really interesting!" Also try giving children special jobs, such as finding a place for our crew to sit at each station.

If someone *really* doesn't want to participate in Recreation, that's okay. VBS can be tiring! Let kids rest until they're ready to participate.

### **If people in my crew don't get along...**

Quietly take the children aside. Tell them you've noticed that they're not getting along. Let them know that although they don't have to be best friends, they do have to be together all week, so things will be a lot more fun if they can at least be kind to one another.

### **If I have an overly active child...**

Pair this child with yourself for partner activities, and suggest that he or she sit with you during quiet times. Or give him or her a focused role of helping you keep the crew on task and setting an example for everyone else.

Ask your Director if you need further assistance.

### **If my crew is out of control and unruly...**

You can be direct in calling out behavior, but maintain the fun in your voice and language. It'll help you avoid setting a pace for a battle of wills. Use fun phrases that coordinate with the VBS theme to get kids' attention or to point out behaviors that need to be corrected in a non-confrontational way.

### **If kids are not paying attention to Station Leaders...**

Compliment a child nearby who is listening well. Put a hand on the non-listener's shoulder. "Tune in. We need to listen."

### **If kids are complaining about activities at stations...**

"Let's show all our leaders they're our friends by showing respect. You may not love everything we do, but if you don't participate, you might miss out on something you didn't expect to be amazing."

*If by midweek there are two or more kids in your crew who just won't listen no matter what you try, call for backup. Talk to the Director and make a new plan so each child gets the most out of their time at VBS.*

