

7 Steps to a Successful VBS

1. Pray

This is a big job, so meet with your Christian Education Director, Children's Pastor, or Sunday School Superintendent. Begin with prayer, asking the Lord to direct you and give you wisdom as you plan for your vacation Bible school. You may want to organize a prayer team who will continue to pray for your program before, during, and after your VBS dates.

2. Plan

Once you have a budget, order several VBS starter kits to determine which one(s) will work best with your church and community. Return the kits you won't need or keep an extra kit to use as an outreach program over spring break—or any time you need a special program. Your kids will enjoy the fun VBS crafts and gifts anytime. Visit eChurchDepot.com for more planning resources including a VBS Comparison Chart and a VBS Planning Timeline for organizing your VBS preparation.

3. Recruit

Ask the Lord to direct you to the people whom He wants to teach your precious children. Ask Him to prepare the hearts of these people to be receptive to becoming VBS leaders or helpers. Then make a list of qualified people who might be interested, and make an appointment to visit them in their homes. Explain the VBS program and the responsibilities of a VBS leader or helper. Ask him or her to pray about the decision, and if desired, leave a specific job description with him or her. To ensure your children the very best experiences in your VBS program, look for leaders and teachers with the following qualifications:

- Are dedicated Christians who seek to live for Christ daily, who study God's Word, and who know the plan of salvation.
- Are tuned-in to kids, and able to build upon their natural interests.
- Enjoy sharing in the children's joy of discovery.
- Are warm, outgoing, and have a genuine love and sensitivity for children.
- Appreciate and seek to follow God's command to teach children.
- Have a basic understanding of children in terms of their physical, mental, and emotional development, and their spiritual needs.
- Are reliable and disciplined to prepare for each day of VBS.
- Are suitable role models for children.

4. Prepare

Before you begin signing up children for VBS, print registration cards onto heavy stock. Give the cards to parents when they register their children. Have parents fill out a registration card for each child attending your program. The card should contain emergency information and a place to list allergies and other medical conditions of your students. For any child with allergies, create a special, brightly

colored name badge with the allergies listed so all leaders and helpers are aware of the allergies and don't inadvertently give the child something that might cause an allergic reaction.

5. Be Creative!

Creativity may not be your strong suit, but no doubt your church is full of creative talent just waiting to be put to good use. Someone who can paint backdrops, another person who can concoct inexpensive yet healthy snack options, a seamstress who can design skit costumes or theme decorations, a crafty mom who can modify the suggested VBS crafts into easy-to-prepare keepsakes made from household supplies—all of these people can play a role in kicking your VBS program up a notch. The key is to tap into their talents without giving them overwhelming responsibilities.

6. Pray (Continually!)

Each day during your VBS program, have volunteers arrive 15-20 minutes early for announcements and a time of prayer. You may want to provide coffee and juice each morning, with donuts or bagels and fruit the first day. Or provide dinner in the evening and invite your VBS families to come (have your volunteers arrive 15-20 minutes before dinner). Use your VBS theme for a brief devotion, then make announcements, share prayer requests and praises, and conclude with a time of prayer (for each other, for the children, and for God's wisdom and discernment). Each day, let volunteers share stories of how God is working during VBS. Then take time to thank Him for the ways He is using each person to spread His Word and change lives.

7. Consider Including Preschoolers in Your VBS

VBS is a great way to introduce young families to your church. Consider including 2- to 5-year-olds in your VBS program. You may want to run a separate preschool program for your little ones. The hours can be the same as for your elementary program, but younger children can have their own learning centers, games, and age-appropriate crafts. The preschoolers can join the other children for your VBS opening and then go their own preschool rooms for the rest of the morning. If your VBS begins with everyone together for an opening song time, be prepared to have one or two helpers take younger children to your preschool classroom for free play if the large group setting becomes overwhelming.

And Finally...Evaluate!

Before your VBS ends, have thank-you notes and evaluation forms ready for your helpers. Gather feedback about what worked and what didn't so you can make changes for next year. Make notes so if you are not involved, you can pass them on to your successor. Thank God for the ways He worked to change lives during VBS. Be sure to let your volunteers know how much they were appreciated. While they're still excited about the great things that happened during VBS, ask if they would be willing to consider being a part of the team next year. (Just to get an idea, not for a firm commitment.) Then follow up just as soon as you set the next date to have them start praying about volunteering for your next VBS program.