

BUILDING WITH CONTESTS

Contests build character and discipline. In Awana, they build Christian character through Bible verses memorized. They build discipline through requirements to be on time, bring dues and pass sections. Contests build club attendance. Children bringing children is our key to reaching them for Christ!

Realize that a contest must fit your club. Contest themes are purposely described in general terms because no two contests should be alike.

Types of contests

- Individual – Clubbers compete against each other for individual prizes.
- Team – Clubbers contribute to their team’s total score. All members of the winning team share the prize.
- Team and individual combination – Although one team wins the contest, individual high scorers on any team also receive prizes.
- Interclub – Planned for competition between all Awana clubs in the church, or between just two groups of clubbers, such as third- and fourth-grade boys vs. girls.
- Plateau – An achievement goal and deadline are determined with a prize awarded all clubbers who complete the work. Clubbers do not compete against each other.

Selecting a Theme

Consider several factors when choosing a contest theme. First, what is the season? Plan football contests for fall. Contests with a snow theme should be scheduled at the first of the year. Camp contests encourage achievement in the spring.

Current events also provide contest themes. For example, a rocket or spaceship contest will excite your boys and girls during a space mission. In election years, count every contest point as a vote for an imaginary candidate.

Planning Procedures

When directors and leaders plan a contest together, both will understand its mechanics better. The end result is a greater degree of unity and cooperation as well as more effective club leadership. And it eliminates clubber frustration because all the leaders can answer contest questions.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, keep contest rules to a minimum. State them clearly and simply. Leaders and clubbers alike prefer a point system of three or four items rather than six or seven. Consider in advance the potential problems regarding points and determine how to handle them (i.e., tie score, unmotivated clubbers).

Decide which phase of the contest you want to especially emphasize. This is the area in which you will award the most points. Assign points to other areas in order of their importance. For example, what should your emphasis be in the early fall season? One high priority will always be encouraging clubbers to achieve in their handbooks and wear their uniforms. The greatest point value, therefore, should be placed on passing sections and wearing the uniform. Perhaps your

contest will take place after Christmas vacation when attendance is low. That is an appropriate time to award the most points for bringing friends to club. If a camp contest is scheduled in the spring, emphasize wearing uniforms, turning in camp applications and completing handbooks.

Choose items from the following list for awarding points, varying your point system from contest to contest.

- Club attendance
- Bringing dues
- Wearing a complete uniform
- Carrying a membership card
- Bringing a Bible
- Bringing a handbook
- Passing sections
- Completing an entrance booklet
- Completing Discoveries and Challenges
- Bringing a friend .1st week
- Bringing a friend .2nd week
- Bringing a friend .3rd week
- Having a friend complete an entrance booklet
- Completing camp application
- Turning in Vacation Bible School pre-registration
- Attending Sunday school

Important note: Choose the areas of achievement from the above list in which your clubbers most need motivation. Do not include all these items (or even most) in one contest. If most clubbers are doing especially well in one area (i.e., bringing dues), simplify your contest and eliminate that item.

Before the contest begins, post requirements, rules and prizes on a bulletin board.

Score Keeping

Contest score sheets simplify record keeping. Set up score sheets ahead of time and instruct leaders how to record points earned. The director or designated contest secretary totals the individual and/or team points each night.

Using big numbers (30, 100, 500, etc.) for points adds excitement. On the other hand, a conservative point system using smaller numbers will lessen the gaps between clubbers and make competition appear keener. Club director and leaders should decide together which scoring system will benefit the club most.

Prize Selection

Contest prizes should be first discussed in commander/director meetings. Although each club may be conducted separately and run its own contest, avoid awkward situations. For instance,

one club should not award elaborate prizes while another gives only token prizes. Such difficulties become obvious when brothers and sisters are in different clubs.

Try to coordinate prizes with the contest theme. For instance, footballs, kicking tees and helmets are suitable prizes for a football contest. For a nautical contest, beach towels and bags, snorkels, flippers, suntan lotion, and goggles are appropriate.

Flashlights, sweatshirts, first-aid kits, etc., fit the theme of a camp contest. Many clubs offer money toward clubbers' camp fees. Or you may choose to award the top winners with a special outing.

Some clubs designate a particular prize for first place, another for second place, etc. Avoid too many expensive individual prizes, however. Another option is to buy six or seven different prizes of equal value. Winners then choose their prizes in the order they finished the contest.

The week before the contest begins, introduce prizes with a big ceremony. Then display prizes during the contest to stimulate excitement. Nothing stifles clubbers' interest more than hearing leaders talk about prizes, but never seeing them.

Award prizes promptly at the end of the contest or at a special parents' night. Schedule team prizes, such as outings, as soon as possible.

Contest Board

Display the contest board the week before the contest begins and show up-to-date points weekly. Some contests lend themselves to displaying points on individual objects (i.e., canoes, spaceships, kites). In other cases, a chart of the clubbers' names and points earned is more effective. To spark interest and achievement, display the prizes on a table near the contest board.

Contest boards may be constructed by painting essential details on large sheets of rolled paper or poster board. You may display the poster on a 4' x 6' flannel graph easel or on an appropriate wall.

Publicity

Start publicizing early! Announce the contest several weeks in advance. Add more details as the starting date approaches.

Poster and fliers build excitement.

- Distribute fliers a week or two before the contest begins. Spell out the point system and describe the prizes.
- Distribute fliers at the contest midpoint. Name the top 10 clubbers and their points. Again, emphasize the prizes.

- Announce the winners and award prizes the night the contest ends. If the prize is a team outing, etc., give the contest winners a flier detailing information about the upcoming event.

Contest Themes

Sample contest themes are described on the following pages. Choose the type of contest your club needs, develop the theme and add your own point system with appropriate prizes.

Don't be limited by these themes. Consider developing other ideas more appropriate to your club's personality.

Again, remember it is important for all leaders to understand the contest before it begins. This assures their enthusiastic cooperation. Note: The club director is the final arbitrator for all contest questions.

Apple Pickin'

Type – Individual (or team) contest

Details – Establish a set of criteria. (Clubbers earn five apples for every visitor brought, two apples per section passed and one apple for bringing club dues.) When a clubber accomplishes one of the criteria, he or she picks a construction-paper apple (or apples) off a paper tree (tacked on a bulletin board). The clubber writes his or her name on the apple and puts it in a basket. When the contest ends, the clubber with the most apples in the basket wins.

Canoe Race

Type – Team contest

Details – Each team “paddles” its canoe to the finish line by earning points. A club bulletin board sketch shows a stream. Along the stream are “checkpoints,” one for each week of the contest, for positioning team canoes. For example, after the first week, the team with the most points paddles its canoe to the first checkpoint. The remaining canoes are placed between the starting line and the first checkpoint, according to their point totals.

Succeeding weeks are handled similarly. The leading team canoe is always secured at a checkpoint. The remaining canoes are spaced between the current week's checkpoint and the previous checkpoint. This procedure assures that one canoe will reach the finish line. It also keeps the last canoe from falling too far behind the others. Cut canoes out of construction paper according to team colors. For added interest, shape paper into actual canoe forms, giving a three-dimensional effect. Checkpoints could be made from craft sticks, pebbles and other materials. One of the criteria for earning points can be qualifying and then applying for Scholarship Camp. Consider awarding individual prizes, in addition to team prizes, on the basis of accumulated points.

Coast to Coast

Type – Individual contest

Details –Travel from the West to East Coast by the mode of your choice! Instruct clubbers to cut pictures out of magazines or catalogs to identify their means of transportation. Mode of transportation includes car, plane, bike, motorcycle, horse, turtle, etc. All vehicles or animals (with clubbers' names written on them) are placed on the far left of a large map. Vehicles progress across the country according to set guidelines. Winners are the first three (or more) who cross the finish line on the East Coast. Clubbers progress two inches (or miles) by simply coming to club, three inches for bringing club dues, eight inches for turning in camp applications, etc.

Decorate the Christmas Tree

Type –Individual (or team) contest

Details –Clubber or team achievement earns construction-paper Christmas tree ornaments hung on a real Christmas tree. Individual or team (or both) with the most ornaments on the Christmas tree by a certain date wins. Note: As clubbers or teams achieve, they write their names on their team-colored ornaments (i.e., Suzie, red team, etc.)

Destination Unknown

Type –Individual (or team) contest

Details –As the contest of your choice ends, plan a mystery trip for the winners. After meeting at church, load clubbers in a bus or van and drive to your destination. For extra fun, include visits to two or more places.

Although you plan your own theme for this contest, consider naming it Destination tin- known. This gives added suspense and excitement for the duration of the contest as well as on the day of the mystery trip.

Dues Contest

Type: Interclub contest

Details –The purpose of this six-week contest is to encourage 100 percent team participation in bringing dues. Thus, you are establishing a pattern in the boys and girls which should continue after the contest ends.

Each club competes against another club solely on percentage of clubbers bringing dues. Record of wins and losses is kept week-by-week. The winning club earns a prize. In the case of a tie, schedule a playoff the week after the contest ends.

1st and 4th weeks: third- and fourth-grade boys vs. fifth- and sixth-grade boys, same for girls.

2nd and 5th weeks: third- and fourth-grade boys vs. girls, same for fifth- and sixth- graders.

3rd and 6th weeks: third- and fourth-grade boys vs. fifth- and sixth grade girls, and remaining girls vs. boys.

Note: When additional clubs are competing, rework this schedule to include them.

1. Leaders may not pay dues for clubbers.
2. Clubbers may pay previous dues missed. Thus, a club's percentage on a given night may go over 100 percent. Dues paid for weeks missed before the contest began do not apply.
3. Clubbers may pay ahead, but dues will not count until the date for which they are to be applied.
4. Specific percentages are not figured cumulatively. On a given night, a club wins or loses. In case of a tie, credit is given for a win in the standings.
5. Clubbers may pay for a friend. All arrangements, however, must be worked out by clubbers without leader interference.

Four Clocks Contest

Type –Team contest

Details –Use construction paper to make red alarm clock, yellow cuckoo clock, green grandfather clock and blue anniversary clock. All clocks should be designed with “moving hands” and tacked onto bulletin board. As teams achieve, the clock hands move. When the contest ends, the team with the “latest time” wins.

Each section passed by a team earns one minute on the clock. Each completed Discovery or Challenge earns three minutes. Each friend brought to club earns 10 minutes, etc.

Giant Snowmen!

Type –Individual (or team) winter season contest

Details –How big is your snowman? As individuals or teams increase their point totals, the size of their snowman increases. Determine your own guidelines for giving away construction paper “snowballs” with which clubbers may construct some of the biggest snowmen you’ve ever seen!

Note: A large wall is needed for clubbers to build (tape) their snowmen.

Pumpkin Patch

Type **Team** fall season contest

Details –In each corner of the club room, arrange several cornstalks to provide a fall atmosphere. As teams earn points, they earn pumpkins (either real or cut from orange construction paper).

Pumpkins are nestled around team cornstalks. Team with most pumpkins at end of contest wins.

When a team has collectively passed five sections, it earns one pumpkin. Each clubber bringing a friend earns one pumpkin for his team, etc. Note: If real pumpkins are used, you may need to make requirements stiffer.

Races ... Races ... Races

Type – Individual (or team) contest

Details –Racing contest themes are too numerous to count. Below are suggestions to stimulate your imagination. Plan these contests much like Coast to Coast, described earlier in this chapter.

Airplane race

Auto race

Bike race

Cross-country running or skiing

Frog jump

Ice-skating

Kite fly

Moon flight

Mountain climbing

Parachute jump

Round-the-world jet trip

Sailing spree

Sledding race

Speed boat race

Turtle race

Turkey Talk

Type –individual (or team) Thanksgiving contest

Details –Several weeks prior to Thanksgiving, hang one large turkey (minus his tail feather) on the wall for each clubber or team- Tail feathers are added to turkey for set number of sections recited, attendance, new clubbers brought, etc. Give tail feathers for those items especially needing emphasis in your club.