

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

AIMS

Before starting a childrens' club, it is important that the team involved asks themselves, "Why do we want to do this?" or maybe more accurately "why does the pastor and church leaders want us to do this?".

Whatever the vision for the Holiday club may be, it is vital that all those involved are clear of it's aims, feel able to share them and live up to them.

Make sure the objectives for you running this holiday club are clear and acceptable. The goals of the club should be considered in relation to:

- the children?
- their families?
- your organization?
- your community?

VENUE

There are numerous options for venues when it comes to running a weekly children's ministry or a week long holiday club. If you're blessed by having the correct facilities at your church, this may be the obvious choice. However, it is worth considering if there are a variety of options in your community that will meet the needs of your planned Club, whether another venue would meet your needs better. Often local community clubs and schools have more appropriate amenities, up-to-date equipment, have safety policies ready in place and are already an established meeting place by the local non-churched community.



Wherever you choose as your venue for running your children's ministry here are some factors to take into consideration:

- It must be suitable for the kinds of activities planned. Does it have a kitchen to prepare snacks and refreshment? Are the toilet facilities adequate? Does it have a large area for group games?

Is it a safe and secure environment? Could other members of the public access the space?

- As a rule of thumb, it is suggested that a minimum of 25 square feet per child is available for 5-8-year-olds and ideally one toilet and hand basin per 10 children.

- Catering facilities, if they are to be used, must meet legal requirements (Note: No children should have unsupervised access to the kitchen)

- Are you able to use the space before and after the sessions for set-up and clean up? If running a week long Holiday Club, are you able to leave the room set up for the next day or will you need to pack down at the end of each day?

- Is it available for the times and dates you require? Do not just presume it will be. Check availability as soon as you can, and make a booking as soon as you are sure you want to use the venue. If using space inside the church, make sure other ministries know you're using it and the condition you need the room kept in. What would happen there was a sudden event, such as a funeral? Would this hinder the space available for the club?

- If using a community building, how much will it cost? Is it within budget? Could you arrange a discount on a group booking?

LEGALITIES

- Insurance – Make sure that your local churches policy covers the club as a whole and any specific activities that you plan to include in it. Especially important if not being run at the church.

Outings need separate parental consent or a separate section on the general consent form.



CHOOSING THE TEAM

Children's ministry is an excellent opportunity for teamwork; however you need to be sure you have a full, suitable and prepared team before you begin. All those who are going to be adult leaders in the ministry need to be selected in accordance to the Child Protection policy of your local church.

Legally you must make sure there are adequate adult leaders for the number of children you expect to have attended the club. (Note: 'adult' means over 18. Older teenagers can be a great help and important role model for younger children; however they must not be counted as an adult in the adult:child ratio).

You should not accept more children than are permitted under your local churches adult:child ratio. Below is a recommend ratio.

For 0 to 2 years - 1 leader to every 3 children (1:3)

For 2 to 3 years - 1 leader to every 4 children (1:4)

For 3 to 8 years - 1 leader to every 8 children (1:8)

For over 8s - 1 leader for the first 8 children followed by 1:12

(i.e. 32 children would require 3 leaders)

Where groups are mixed, it is highly recommended to have at a male and female leader. It is also advisable to have some extra team members who can step in at last minute should someone be unable to attend. Leaders of specific roles should also have an assistant should they be unable to attend.

SPECIFIC ROLES

It is essential that everyone knows what is expected of them and is aware of the other team members' duties and responsibilities within the team.

The following are specific roles that should be given to team members. roles:



COORDINATOR

You will need to appoint a coordinator for the ministry. The coordinator is the person to whom all others can go to for information and help. The coordinator will also make sure that everyone involved and the local church is kept up-to-date.

Usually, they are also the person who keeps the flow of activities, introducing the next items and keeping everything on schedule.

It is important to finish on time each day as parents may need to leave promptly for other appointments.

TEAM LEADERS AND ASSISTANT

Each team should have a clear leader who is assisted by a helper to take care of any practicalities whilst the leader is directing the group's activity. In mixed groups, it is recommended to have a male and female. These adults will be the primary contact for the children in their team and should provide good role models in terms of joining in activities, leading discussions, behaviour and having fun!

REGISTRATION

No child should be allowed to attend the club without a consent form that has been signed by someone with parental responsibility. It is advised to have all consent forms returned before the first day of the club to avoid over-subscription and provide for special requirements (Remember, the venue, number of leaders, age of children, activities and aims will have a limiting effect on the total numbers you can welcome into the Club).

Prior registration is also critical for catering for any food allergies or dietary requirements, individual learning needs and specific medical conditions.

Each adult and child at the club should have a name badge (templates are supplied in the pack.) Any adult or child who is seen at the venue without a badge should be challenged.



OTHER ROLES

You will need people who can cover the following areas:

publicity;

administration;

first aid;

cleaning

drama

crafts

catering

MEETINGS

SMALL TEAM PLANNING MEETING

At the planning meeting, you will need to reach decisions on the issues described above: aims, timing, venue, team members, numbers and ages of participants. It is not vital that everyone is at this meeting, only the key leaders and the church pastor or childrens' leader.

Budget: This is also a good time to discuss budget: how much will you spend on the venue, materials, catering, photocopying and printing, equipment and resources, other expenditure specific to your plans. How will you cover your costs? Do you need to ask your local church for funds? It is important for people in charge of specific roles to know their budget if they are responsible for buying any items.

Publicity: How are people going to know about the club? (Poster and flyer templates are included in this pack.) Publicity should be targeted according to the children you are trying to reach. If you're trying to reach a local area, only advertise in that area. If you're aiming at a specific age group, advertise in that age local school.

Posters can be displayed in significant places in your local community; flyers handed out or sent to last year's participants if you had a club last year.

FULL TEAM MEETINGS

Before running the club, you will need to have at least two meetings, although these can be held back to back. This is also an excellent opportunity for the team to build relationships before the club starts.

SAFETY AND GOOD PRACTICE

All leaders must be reminded of local church's child protection policy. Even if regularly involved in children's work, this is a good opportunity for all to remind themselves of general principles of good practice when working with children.

THE PROGRAMME

Everyone involved should be familiar with the whole program. Run through the sketch and the small group talks. Work out who is going to deliver which activities and what elements need adapting for your local situation.



SUPPLIES

Collecting all the supplies and equipment needed for your children's ministry might seem like an impossible task. Small churches dream of having the resources of some larger churches. However, if you divide the project into smaller tasks, and you'll notice it all coming together.

Make a list

The first task is to make a list of all the supplies you're going to need in order to run your children's club. This will change according to which activities you choose to run.

Once you have a completed list of everything you're going to need it is time to source them.

Own - The first step is to mark what you already own. If your church already has ground markers, for example, this is one less thing for you to source.

Borrow - There are many items that will may not be needed after the completion of this program. If you don't see an ongoing need for an item, it is worth seeing if you can borrow it. Could a local school or church lend you extra tables or equipment? How about church members? You will be amazed what people keep in their garages.

Donations - For church members who are unable to help / volunteer at the children's club, donating items is an ideal way of still being involved in a practical way. Make a list of the items you need and make your local church aware of it. Use your church website, notice board, Facebook page, newsletter, and bulletin. Have people sign off items they can donate.

Buy - Finally, there may be items that you will need to buy. Shop around and look online to make sure you get the best price. Don't be scared to ask local business for a discount, you may well be surprised by their willingness to support projects working with children within their community.

DAILY CHECKS

The following checks should be carried out daily before any children are allowed access to the club.

- Make sure all the rooms / areas you are going to use are safe and set out as you desire them. Check the cleanness of toilets and supplies.
- Make sure everyone with a specific role is there well in advance of the start time. If not call them to check the reason for the delay and to confirm whether you need to make any alternative arrangements.
- Check that all leaders are fit to work, healthy, clean and in the right attitude.
- Confirm that the building is well sign-posted: toilets, areas for activities, emergency exits, no entry areas.
- Give a printed programme for each session, with timings to all leaders
- Check that you have an accident book with empty pages and access to a telephone and a complete first aid kit.
- Have all materials to hand and make sure everyone knows where the materials for their activities are. Game and sports equipment, craft materials, pens and pencils and so on. Always have a few extra prepared.
- Follow your agreed registration procedures carefully

WHEN THE HOLIDAY CLUB IS ALMOST OVER

As the final hour of the holiday club approaches, you could easily be forgiven for that long sigh of relief. You've spent late nights, and early mornings preparing for it, full and busy days running it and bought a fair number of resources for it. Nevertheless as the holiday club comes to a close, there is still several important tasks that need to be completed.

Follow-up

If you have reached your local community through the holiday club, the likelihood is many of those who have attended your holiday club, probably do not attend your church. Now that the holiday club is nearly finished the big question is, "How do I get them to come back?" Here's some tips:

Information Pack

Through this one holiday club, you have opened the door to reach these children on a regular basis and share with them and their families the the Gospel. On the closing day of the Holiday Club, it is a helpful idea to send home information with every child. Don't just assume that your community knows every ministry your church offers. This is the opportunity to reach out to parents and siblings of non-church children who attended. The children who had a great time on your holiday club may inspire their mother to start attending your craft group or coffee morning. Make sure the whole family knows you're a church who loves them and provides for them. Included information regarding your weekday and weekend ministries. Also share about key areas a family might be looking for help in such as marriage classes, a relevant teaching series, divorce recovery, financial classes, etc.



Make the next step simple

You should have a clear next step.

- Would you like to have a family celebration service, where you can give out prizes and show photos for the holiday club?
- Would you like children to attend your weekly children's ministry?
- Will you run another holiday club during the next school holidays?
- How about a back to school day to finish off the holidays?

No matter what you want the next step to be, make sure the children and their parents know it. Do not simply assume that they will guess.

Thank Everyone

It is essential that you thank everyone involved in the Holiday Club. People are busy, and there are many ministries who need assistance, consequently don't forget to thank those who responded to God's prompting to serve in the holiday club.

A handwritten thank you card.

Sometimes the best way to show you appreciate your volunteers is the old fashioned way, by writing a thank you card. A small note can go a long way in displaying your appreciation. Try to make each note unique by thinking of specific things you saw that volunteer do to serve. Don't forget to thank all those who donated items, prayed and helped in other practical ways. Make them aware of the fact that you saw them serving and didn't take their time for granted.

Special thank you event

Another way to show your appreciation is to hold a special thank you evening. This can be a time where everyone involved can share testimonies from the holiday clubs, pray and thank God for how he provided and worked during the week and pray for the follow-up. At this event, you could also have the pastor give thanks to everyone for their support and hand out the thank you cards and possibly small gifts.



Organize & Store:

Now is the best time to organize all the materials you have collected for the week. By organizing everything now, you can dramatically save money and time in preparing for the next holiday club.

Keep

Any items that can be reused should be clearly labelled and stored safely. Even small items like pens, pencils, whistles, papers should be carefully stored ready for future use.

Make sure you store all the contact and personal information securely also. You will need this contact information for follow-up and invitation to a future event.

Give Away

Most churches have a shortage of space. If you have items that you are never going to use again, find a good home and donate them. Are there another ministry in the church or local community projects that could benefit from them?

Recycle + Throw way

Finally, if you're not going to use something again and it's not in good enough condition to give away, take it your local recycling centre. Don't just leave it in a corner somewhere.

Evaluate

Evaluating means reflecting on your holiday club to identify the strengths, weakness and determine follow-up goals. You could create forms for the kids, parent and volunteer or simply write down what you have learned from informal conversation. Whichever you choose, it is important that you cover the following questions.

1. What were your "successes"?
2. Were you able to focus on your aims/purposes and did you accomplish it?
3. What do you want to repeat/do the same way next year?
4. What didn't work the way you wanted it to?

