



Discipline within VBS

For VBS to have maximum impact, Rafters and leaders must be able to focus on the planned lessons and activities. Sometimes more structure is needed to create an optimum learning environment.

Consider these guidelines when setting up structures to avoid problems; adapt them to fit your church and the ages and abilities of your Rafters.

- ▲ **Set reasonable expectations for your Rafters based on their ages and abilities.** Consider their attention spans. For example, younger Rafters learn more from active involvement than from passive, quiet listening.
- ▲ **Capture the attention of all your Rafters before beginning.** Starting the activity while the Rafters are still focused on other concerns makes it difficult to continue without distraction. (Pro Tip: Sometimes a soft voice will force the Rafters to be quiet in order to avoid missing part of the story!)
- ▲ Provide an overview of the activities and generate excitement for what comes next. **Most Rafters respond better to working toward a reward rather than avoiding a negative consequence.**
- ▲ **Model the type of behavior you expect from the Rafters.** Your patience and manners will guide the Rafters in their own proper behavior. As soon as possible, learn each student's name. Be prepared to call the Rafters by name to help draw them into the activity.
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- ▲ Clearly communicate desired behavior to the group as well as individuals, focusing on what is beneficial rather than the negatives.
- ▲ Find ways of rewarding Rafters who exhibit desired behavior. **Find what motivates them.** Something as simple as a smile and public praise can give great reinforcement.
- ▲ **Encourage cooperation and ownership by involving the Rafters in making decisions where possible.** Of course, be prepared to follow through with either alternative!
- ▲ Pique your Rafters' natural curiosity to generate interest in what you want to share. **Create an environment where all Rafters can explore and ask questions safely and with dignity.**
- ▲ **Remember that Rafters come to VBS from diverse backgrounds.** Communicate that the rules must be followed by all, and apply them consistently and fairly.
- ▲ Consistency is key for effective discipline within your VBS. **Make sure all leaders commit to supporting the discipline guidelines.**
- ▲ **For VBS to have maximum impact, Rafters and leaders must be able to focus on the planned lessons and activities.** Sometimes more structure is needed to create an optimum learning environment.
- ▲ **Adapt these guidelines to fit your church and the ages and abilities of your Rafters.**