



VBS for Rafterers with Special Needs

Tips and Helps for Volunteers

Encouragement for All Leaders

- ▲ Remember that Rafterers with disabilities have God-given gifts to share with you and with others!
- ▲ Generate an atmosphere of love and respect, and present a positive attitude toward all Rafterers.
- ▲ Use multiple teaching methods provided in each session to engage all of the Rafterers' senses.
- ▲ Overlook harmless behaviors. Try to stay calm yourself when faced with a behavior that you don't understand, and consult your Director if you need help handling a challenge.
- ▲ Keep directions simple by giving one at a time.
- ▲ Announce a five-minute warning before the end of all activities to facilitate smooth transitions.

Music Leaders

- ▲ Provide copies of the Take-Home CD to Rafterers to help them learn the songs at home.
- ▲ Teach each song's sign language and motions as you go to keep everyone engaged.
- ▲ Use PowerPoint® slides from the Complete Music CD during all music times. When needed, provide words of the song in large print or braille.

Recreation Leaders

- ▲ Review your games to determine if adaptations need to be made.
- ▲ Ask questions to make sure your Heroes understand how to play each game.
- ▲ Pair Rafterers up, and encourage them to interact and work together as they play.

Science Leaders

- ▲ Display a visual, step-by-step guide illustrating the procedure for each experiment.
- ▲ Allow Rafterers to work at their own pace.
- ▲ Encourage other Rafterers to help them as needed.
- ▲ Announce a five-minute warning before the end of an activity to facilitate smooth transitions.

Craft Leaders

- ▲ Allow extra time for special needs Rafterers to complete their projects. Have an extra project on hand for Rafterers who finish quickly (easy options available in our **Reproducible Fun Pages!**).
- ▲ Provide additional assistance with cutting, and other tasks as needed for each craft.
- ▲ Foster independence by allowing Rafterers to complete as many tasks as possible on their own.
- ▲ Some Rafterers have a difficult time focusing in large groups. Prepare a volunteer to provide one-on-one guidance when needed.
- ▲ For Rafterers with visual impairments, have craft materials with a variety of textures available.

Snack Leaders

- ▲ Keep extra snack supplies on hand in case of spills or other accidents.
- ▲ Ask your Director if any Rafterers have food allergies, sensitivities, or other dietary restrictions.
- ▲ Have snack alternatives on hand.
- ▲ Be sure to read lists of ingredients carefully; food substances that cause reactions can be present in common foods.
- ▲ Rafterers with food allergies often feel left out or treated as an "inconvenience" during snack times. Being attentive to Rafterers' dietary needs shows them that they are valued. To Rafterers with a gluten intolerance, a cookie they can eat is not just a fun snack, but tangible evidence that they are known, loved, and welcomed!



VBS for Rafters with Special Needs

Director Tips and Checklist

ALL Rafters are welcome! Regardless of limitations, Rafters all need to experience the love of Jesus Christ through caring adults. God created each of us with a variety of abilities that leaders need to take into consideration when planning VBS.

Besides more obvious physical and communication challenges, you may have Rafters who need extra structure, require adaptations in their physical environment, or just have a difficult time relating to others. A few simple steps and modifications can make all the difference in helping Rafters with disabilities to feel included, experience God's love, and grow in their discipleship.

A Checklist for Directors

- ▲ **Inform families that you welcome Rafters with special needs and disabilities.** Families often feel that churches are not comfortable with or prepared for their child's challenges.
- ▲ **Meet with each special needs Rafter's parents or caregivers.** They can provide valuable insights and suggestions concerning the specific needs for their child. Ask about:
 - the family's experiences in church
 - the child's interests and favorite activities
 - the child's daily routine, allergies, medications, and any physical accommodations or special equipment requirements
 - how the child best relates to others
 - preferred coping/discipline strategies
- ▲ **Contact a special education teacher** to help you understand a particular disability and for additional suggestions.
- ▲ **Communicate all pertinent info on supporting your special needs Rafters to Station Leaders.**
- ▲ **Arrange for a Safe Sanctuaries-appropriate**

"buddy" to help with the activities or to provide gentle reminders on behavior. Be sure to equip him/her with a copy of the Buddy Guide in advance (found in the Rolling River Rampage VBS Special Needs Classroom Leader guide, available at cokesburyvbs.com)!

- ▲ **Be alert for Rafters whose parents have not informed you about their child's disability.** Have a volunteer ready to step in and help the child or teacher as needed.
- ▲ **Provide a copy of the handout on page 67 for each of your team members** to prepare them for appropriate inclusion of special needs Rafters!

**KEEP
CALM
AND
RAFT
ON**

