

Children's Church Discipline

When it comes to dealing with children's church discipline, we believe in preventative maintenance. We honestly don't spend a whole lot of time dealing with children's church discipline problems because we strive to have a schedule so packed with interesting and fun activities that the children don't have time to misbehave!

Here are a few of the "tricks up our sleeve" when it comes to children's church discipline and getting kids' attention (Note: We never use these methods during the Bible lesson -- only during the songs & games portions of the hour):



- **Eyeballs** -- The kids in our children's church ministry are trained to come to attention when my husband or I shout "Eyeballs!" They reply with "Click!" & immediate silence and are expected to look straight at our eyeballs. We probably use this method three to six times per week. I've noticed that when we overdo it, the method seems to lose its effectiveness.
- **Bicycle Horn** -- Have a bicycle horn handy; and when the noise level gets too high, squeak it. Everyone must be silent immediately, and the first kid to quickly stand to his/her feet gets a small prize. This gets their attention. We have also used an air horn.
- **Cheer Ball** -- You need a (preferably brightly colored) ball about the size of a baseball.
 Toss the ball into the air and allow the kids to cheer. However, the second that the ball returns to your hand... complete and immediate silence. Each time it gets too loud or the kids start getting out of hand during the children's church hour, toss the cheer ball up.
- **Cheer Box** -- This method of dealing with discipline is similar to the Cheer Ball, except you need a brightly painted wooden box. My little boys & I painted such a box for each of them (their "treasure boxes") as a homeschooling project, and those work perfectly. The ones we did were put out by Crayola and are painted bright primary colors and covered with frog stickers and a clear coat. Anyway, each time you pick up the box and open it, the kids can yell and cheer; but as soon as you slam the box shut... complete and immediate silence (are you getting the impression that we truly expect complete and immediate silence?!).

Let me just take a moment to explain what does **NOT** work in dealing with children's church discipline. Yelling. Screaming. Threatening. Grouchiness. Trying to make the kids feel guilty for not listening even though you "sacrificed all week and worked so hard to prepare this lesson for them." In my teenage days as a young, immature, amateur children's church teacher I tried all of these methods. I can testify with blessed assurance ~ they do **NOT** work!



The methods above are for getting the kids' attention whenever the noise level barely begins to get out of control. You really should make it a practice to have little tolerance for an out-of-control environment and breaking the [two rules](#).



You will truly find it unnecessary to worry about dealing with children's church discipline much if you just stick to your [schedule](#) and keep everything super fun. Your children's church ministry kids will eventually respect you greatly when they become assured that you love them, you really do work hard to prepare for them each week, and you have a lot of fun things for them to participate in... if they behave!

In the event that you find yourself having a serious children's church discipline problem or problematic student, here are some guidelines to follow:

- **Hands Off!** Do not EVER grab, swat, spank, or physically handle a child in your ministry. **EVER.** We have found it wise not to even discipline *our own children* that are in our children's church when they misbehave. The liability issues are just too much of a reality anymore. For more information, take a look at my [interview with Christian Law Association Attorney Charlotte Cover](#).
- **'Tis better to sacrifice one than all** -- Don't be afraid to ask a parent or bus captain to remove a child from your ministry, if the child is truly unmanageable and problematic. Hopefully, your children's church ministry is so exciting that the kid will shape up next time in order to stick around for the fun. However, remember ~ no idle threats. Do not tell a child that you are going to suspend him unless you are truly ready and willing to put your money where your mouth is. You must *always* mean business with every single word that comes out of your mouth during the children's church hour.
- **Cut him some slack** -- If you have a *problem child* who is genuinely putting forth an effort, be sure to recognize and reward him. Do everything in your power to keep him from get discouraged. Recognize his good behavior publicly, if you discern that it won't embarrass him. If his effort is truly outstanding, select him as a contestant for your [Behavior Award Game](#) instead of the church kid who wins every week.
- **Consider his soul** -- Don't ever overlook the possibility that you may be dealing with a lost soul who needs Christ. Spend some time after class (or have a helper discreetly pull the child aside) and question them about their salvation. Be willing and prepared to share God's Word and offer spiritual help.

