

4 TIPS FOR LEADING KIDS IN SMALL GROUPS

The first time you're in charge of a small group of kids, you might feel pretty intimidated. It's a big responsibility, and there's so much to remember—names, talking points, and rules to your icebreaker. Beyond that, there's the stuff you can't always prepare for, like their unexpected ideas, silly conversations, and curious questions they can ask. There's just so much small group leaders need to know.

When we stop to think about it, small group leaders have some of the most important roles within kids ministry.

- They learn about their lives.
- They get to build deep connections with kids.
- They hear their questions and help them make sense of their experiences.

With such an important role, how can small group leaders become the best, most helpful, loving people within your kids ministry?

Well, if you're a kids pastor, we've got a few ideas for how you can train your current small group leaders. And if you're a volunteer, we've got some ideas to help you become a better small group leader right now.

Here are four tips that can help, no matter your role!

Tip #1: KNOW YOUR ROLE

Your overall role as a small group leader can be broken down into three parts:

- You're a **guide.** While not an easy role to define, you're part mentor, pastor, friend, and teacher. But you're not fully any of those things. Thankfully, you don't need to have all of the answers. Instead, you get to help lead a conversation that will help your kids find truth together.
- You're a **facilitator.** This is more than just knowing your material and the Scripture you'll be talking through. You also have to know how to facilitate a conversation by drawing kids in, asking different types of questions, learning when to push for more, and knowing when to have fun.
- You're a **person.** Being a small group leader means building relationships. You can't lead the kids you serve without building connections with each person in your group. That means learning about the things they enjoy, asking them questions about their lives, and showing up to their important events as often as you can.

Because of their age, you might discover your group of kids is full of wild questions, short attention spans, and silly voices. You may need to lead them step-by-step through a craft or activity, so don't forget to be patient with yourself and them!

Tip #2: KNOW YOUR GOAL

Your goal is to help kids take the *next step* in their faith journey.

You're not there to have all the answers or to solve all of their problems. That's a great goal but not always realistic, so you can relax a little. Instead, help kids take the next step toward living out their faith. You're helping them plant the roots of their faith that will help them as they grow up.

Plus, the kids in your group are going to grow differently. Spiritual growth is a journey, and no two journeys are exactly the same. As kids build up spiritual habits on their own time, they'll grow in their faith differently, and that's completely okay. It's just important to remember as you help each of your kids explore what the next step in their faith can look like.

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Tip #3: FOCUS ON HABITS

Remember your role, or ... *roles?* You're a guide, facilitator, and person. Most likely, you're not the primary influence in a kid's faith. Their caregivers, mentors, and family members might fill that role more often than you. But **you *are* a part of the discipleship process for every person in your group.**

You've probably heard the word "discipleship" quite a bit, but let's be honest—it's a word many people have defined differently. We like to think of discipleship in terms of four spiritual habits. **These are the decisions, behaviors, and rhythms that help everyone—kids included—grow spiritually over time.** They are ...

- **Spend time with God**
- **Spend time with others**
- **Use your gifts**
- **Share your story**

When we focus on helping kids build habits in these four areas, we give them chances to grow in new ways. And it doesn't take a ton of forethought to do it, either.

You can help them **spend time with God** by assigning a Scripture reading or some prayer prompts. You can help them **spend time with others** by organizing a hangout or game night outside of your normal meeting time. You can help kids **use their gifts** by giving them space to practice new skills. And you can help them **share their story** by inviting them to share parts of their story often.

Helping kids build up their habits doesn't have to be intimidating. If you want to learn more about the four spiritual habits and a discipleship strategy that can help, just check out this article.

Tip #4: KEEP LEARNING

Those first three tips cover some of the basics of being a small group leader, but that's not where this ends. There's no certification course for leading a small group that teaches you everything you need to know. There's a lot of learning on the job you'll need to do, like ...

- Learn from your mistakes.
- Get better at asking for help.
- Work on balancing deep conversation with fun bonding experiences.
- Figure out how to engage the introverts while managing your extroverts.
- Find resources to help someone experiencing a crisis you've never dealt with before.
- Research the complicated questions, issues, and ideas your group members bring up.

Never stop learning. It's well-known that leaders are more effective when they keep learning and growing. You might be the one *leading* the small group, but you can still grow while you do.

So many people in your church and your ministry would love to help you. Talk to your youth pastor. Ask people in other ministries for tips and advice. Leading a group is a big deal, and you don't have to feel like you're doing it alone.

It's why we're here to help. We make Grow Kids Curriculum to help small group leaders like you be great at what they do. Inside of Grow Kids, you'll find ...

- Small group guides and questions
- Volunteer meeting outlines
- Monthly tip videos to help you be an even better small group leader
- A volunteer handbook to help you know your role

And if your church doesn't use Grow Curriculum, we have tons of other resources and strategies in our blog for you to steal. Take what's there, tweak it to match your ministry, and make it your own. We hope it helps you be even better at running a small group and connecting with kids!



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