

What to Do When They Wiggle, Talk and Distract

A classroom full of children is always going to bring on a challenge because kids are made **to move, verbalize and interact with one another**. Some children are more challenged than others in controlling these behaviors. So what does a teacher do about it?



First of all let them know WHY they are there.

Without a uniform purpose among the group, every child will invent their own.

In Good News Club, we are gathered to honor God by listening to what He has to say to us in the Bible. (Teacher, always include yourself as a listener to God and as a sinner in need of repentance and exercising faith in the Son.)

Second, let them know the rules for everyone. Those are rules of respect.

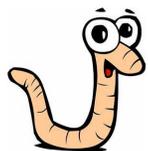
They can be counted on one hand. (Fingers up for counting) Remember, let kids move.

1. Respect / Honor God.
2. Respect those in authority.
3. Respect your neighbor.
4. Respect the room and its contents.
5. Respect yourself by allowing yourself to listen to what God has to say to you/us.

Referring back to the specific rule helps the child know the specific area he/she needs to address. This answers the question every child has, which is *“What is expected of me?”*

Thirdly, introduce yourself and your team members.

Children are shuffled from one classroom setting to another with a wide variety of adults in the room or on the campus. They do not automatically know what authority each adult has, what role, why the adult is there? We have heard questions like: “Are you paid to do this?” “Do you live here?” “Why do you come?” “How long will you be here?” Behind these questions are suspicions about **motive, obligation, and trust**. In their mind, they might wonder if you are just part of the system or if you might run out on them when things get tough like other adults in their past. They need to know that you are there because you love God and He loves each child and wants to make them a part of His forever family. It is a **joy** for us to have this privilege to be with the children. If they don't see or hear the love of God in you, you have lost a hearing.



Structuring the classroom experience for positive outcomes.

Now, let's explore some basic details about a classroom and the way it is run that makes a difference when it comes to keeping kids engaged in the lesson focus.

When they walk in, they need to know there is a structure in place.

At the moment of stepping through the door there needs to be

- A specific, practical place for their backpack
- A nametag ready for each child.
- An activity/group for each child to join.

Transitions

- Transitioning from one activity (song, prayer, lesson) to another should be smooth and without delay.
- Team members need to be ready to move right into their part with materials in hand.
- Instructions for the children for each activity need to be simple, brief and clear.
- Link the transitions with reviewing the key teaching or memory verse so that the overall presentation of the message is not chopped into pieces.

Accountability and Belonging

Each child needs to feel that he/she belongs and is accountable to a team member. Small groups are valuable in allowing personal attention, for asking questions, for personal challenges to the lesson given, for reminders to have a quiet time with God and to listen to their memory verses.

Closure

Concluding a class is valuable because the purpose for being with the children is that they will carry with them, God's message in their hearts when they leave. If the class is dismissed chaotically, it's more likely that they will enter the "out of sight, out of mind" mode.

- Try concluding with an inspirational GNC song to linger in their minds as they exit.
- Challenge them to share their memory verse with the first person they see after walking through the door.
- Give them a question to consider: "How long will it take you to obey God the next time you have a decision to make after you leave this room?"



What about the extra wiggles, talking and distracting that a few kids in the group are bound to be displaying? Here are some brief tips that have worked well for some children:

The Buddy System

Let them sit with a buddy who helps them remember the Rules of Respect. This can be an older, mature clubber or a team member. They become "Respect Buddies."

Special Assistant

Give them an assistant's job for a team member like helping with the song, helping to hold the visual, starting/stopping the music. Holding the memory verse, helping with the game, setting up and closing the classroom. This privilege is conditional on their mature behavior before the class. Most kids want to be seen as mature and not a baby who is not able to control themselves.

Seating Arrangement

Where the child is sitting and how they are sitting can make the difference.

- Some do better on the floor, some better in a chair.
- Some focus more successfully in the front row without the visual distraction of children in front of them.
- Some do better in the back away from being touched and noise.
- Some have to move. There are inflatable seats or bean chairs made for this purpose. A simple carpet square just might be the answer.

Talk About It Strategy

Kids need to identify what is going on within themselves to some degree in order to get a handle on how to respond appropriately in different situations. Ask them what "strategies" they have found to help. (One child answered, "Just put duck tape over my mouth." Obviously, he needed a better strategy.) Some children have classroom plans set by their teachers. Ask the child what the procedure is in their classroom to help them control their behavior. If they do not have one, ask if together you and he/she can develop a simple one for GNC.

Still on Campus

They need to be reminded that just because school is dismissed, they are still on the campus and need to follow the school rules. GNC kids and team members are guests on the school campus and need to respect school policies.

Make Sure to Notice

Then make sure to notice and give feedback, small rewards occasionally when you see that they are really making an effort or showing improvement.

Developmental Tips

Children are undergoing **dynamic** growth physically, emotionally, academically, and socially. They come with a variety of bumps and bruises in life, disappointments, unfulfilled expectations, and times when they have failed even though they tried their very best. Competition is tough and peer pressure can be cruel.

They need to know that GNC is a safe place where their developmental and emotional needs are taken into account when they are asked to “perform” by answering a question, saying the verse, singing, playing a game, or *listening*.

Therefore, **engineer** into your lesson frequent times when they can **move, verbalize, and interact** appropriately.

- Allow them to “**enter into the story**” by mimicking the character’s facial expressions, posture, and movement.
- Allow them to **answer questions** more personally by quietly giving the answer to their neighbor (or Buddy) rather than shouting out together. Another suggestion is to have the children silently mouth the answer. Then, the teacher supplies the correct answer and the child can check his/her own answer. (Much time is wasted in giving long answers or waiting for individual children to answer questions with more than a one or two word answer. Meanwhile, you’ve lost the attention of at least two-thirds of the class.)
- Prepare a creative review by restructuring the review questions into rhymes where the class fills in the rhyming word. (An old game called Ralph the Rhymer) **For example:** Fill in the rhyming word in this sentence.
God’s salvation is for every (nation). Or the victory is won in God’s (Son).
For the rhyming review, children do much better by answering as a class. It also gives confidence to those who came close to getting the rhyming word. They are immediately a part of the whole group with the right answer.
- Test the games before you bring them to class. Anticipate the interactions, positive and negative that may come about when the class gets involved. Adjust the games to fit your children’s needs or choose a similar, appropriate game. Coming up with a new game every class is not always the best. Kids learn by repetition. A familiar favorite game can be the best choice with an occasional new game to “test-drive.” Also, ask yourself, “In what way could this game, and the interactions that it provides, serve to support the main teaching?” A game is more valuable when it becomes an “experience” that supports the lesson.

Touching and Feeling

Kids in dynamic sensori-motor development need to touch and feel. For those children, let them hold a squishy ball or bumpy ball that doesn't roll easily, a stuffed animal or the answer to your first, second or third question. (Sometimes the Buddies are needed to help with this activity.) Supply picture clues for them to hold for the Bible lesson. They also could be holding a peg to insert, a missing piece of the puzzle etc., that you will need in the lesson. One of my favorite touch and feel activities is to give each child one drop of water to hold in their hand as we talk about how the Creator made water (its properties) and the water of life that Jesus gives.