

Sunday School Activities for Your Class and Why You Need Them

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Why do we include Sunday School activities in our lessons? Is it just to encourage hyperactive toddlers to let off some steam? To give our voice a break? To receive one vital sign of life from our teenagers?

Added Extra?

If you've always viewed Sunday School activities as an added extra – fine for craftsy-type teachers or flighty educators who can't keep their kids under control, but not for the serious-minded instructor – think again. Sunday School activities are actually fundamental for a child's learning process; as a hands-on approach, they fit perfectly with the theoretical principles of child development and learning. In fact, research shows that adults also grasp core concepts more thoroughly through a discussion- and activity-oriented approach.

Benefits

The bottom line is that you want the children or teenagers in your Sunday School class not just to accumulate a bunch of interesting biblical trivia or moral theories in their heads, but to truly take Sunday School lessons to heart and into their daily life. You want to see changed lives – children who truly know and love God and who are being transformed by his love. Transformation is much more than theory or information only. It's also more than simply throwing out an application at the end of class. Rather, your goal is to have your class interact with God's truths in such a way that they realize that God is talking to them through Bible stories, shedding light on their attitudes, understanding of God's character, relationships, communication, problem solving, decision making and selection of values, for example. You must incite your children to think and interact, not just passively sit in the Sunday School classroom – often engaged in their own daydream world – while you earnestly preach at them. Sunday School activities are vital in the process of encouraging this participation.

Activities in the Lesson

Involvement in Sunday School activities stimulates children to learn by doing – even (can it be?) by having fun and playing, something that is highly motivating for them and contributes to their emotional, social, intellectual and moral development. While Sunday School activities don't replace formal instruction, they reinforce the concepts you teach, so your class time ends up looking something like this:

- Lesson
Introduce the big idea you want them to grasp.
- Activity
Involve them in a Sunday School activity that will further bolster that big idea.
- Discussion
During the activity or after, incorporate meaningful discussion that will help them tie the lesson and Sunday School activities together, drawing out the main principles. Using easy, nonthreatening questions to begin with, discuss what happened during the activity, then merge into comparing the activity with real life, getting them to share their opinions, and finally talk about their own daily life, behavior and attitudes.
- Application
Summarize and then guide them in translating the big idea to their daily lives.

Sunday School activities bring many benefits to the classroom and to you as a teacher, not only to the individual student's life. Among other things, they increase your students' motivation to learn by arousing curiosity; help involve children with different learning styles; allow them to make mistakes in a safe setting (and thus learn more

effectively); make them more receptive; unveil their thoughts and interests; and encourage group participation and socialization, thus building relationships and creating shared memories.

Conclusion

With these issues firmly in mind, you can see the importance of turning to the Sunday School activities that we offer at Sunday School Ideas for New Teachers. And while these activities are a definite aid in helping your toddlers get rid of excess energy, giving yourself a breather or actually getting your teenagers to respond, they will especially help you in reaching that important goal of life transformation.

So many possibilities!

Note of **Caution** for all resources: You should omit those activities that depict Jesus graphically. This is a practice with many of these sources. It is especially evident in categories such as “printable” activities or “coloring” pages. So as with anything in life, ‘Eat the chicken and throw away the bones’.

Ideas for various interactive teaching methods.

- 🐟 Write each word of the memory verse on a separate piece of paper.
- 🐟 Hide the individual words around the room.
- 🐟 Ask the children to find the words and lay them out in the correct order.
- 🐟 Recite the memory verse.
- 🐟 Repeat several times.

Quick Draw.

- 🐟 You will need a dry erase or chalk board or large pieces of butcher paper and chalk or markers.
- 🐟 Make cards with subjects you want the children to draw.
- 🐟 Divide the class into two or three groups.
- 🐟 Have one child from Group 1 select a card and draw the picture.
- 🐟 As the child draws the picture, Group 1 tries to guess what the picture is portraying.
- 🐟 You may want to set a time limit for drawing the picture and guessing what it is.
- 🐟 If Group 1 cannot guess what the drawing is before time expires, another group can guess.
- 🐟 Rotate so each child in each group has an opportunity to draw.

Word Scramble.

- 🐟 Divide the class into two or three groups.
- 🐟 Write each word of the memory verse or challenge activity on a separate piece of paper.
- 🐟 Mix up the words and ask the children to put the words in order.
- 🐟 First group finished wins.

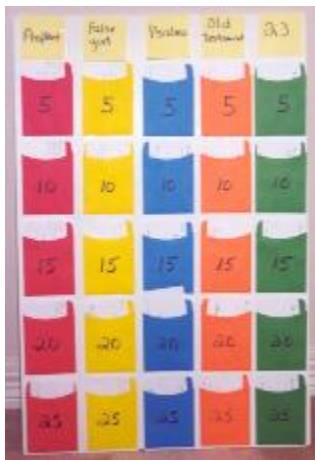
Mancala.



- ☞ Mancala is a board game that was played during biblical times.
- ☞ Use plastic bowls (or masking tape) to set up a large Mancala board on the floor. The board is divided into two rows of 6 bowls each with two large bowls on each end. You will need 48 rocks or marbles to use for stones.

- ☞ Divide the class into two teams.
- ☞ Each team has one row of 6 bowls with the larger bowl to the right of the row serving as that team's mancala or scoring bowl.
- ☞ The game begins with 4 stones in each of the 12 small bowls.
- ☞ Ask a team to recite a memory verse, or challenge, or answer a review question.
- ☞ If the team answers correctly, that team, or an individual on that team, can take a turn.
- ☞ To take a turn, pick up all the stones from one of the bowls. Put one stone in each bowl, including your mancala but not the other team's mancala, going in a counter-clockwise direction.
- ☞ If you put the last stone in your mancala, take another turn. If not, the other team takes a turn.
- ☞ If you put the last stone in one of your bowls that is empty, take all the stones from the other team's bowl that is directly across from that bowl. Put the stones in your mancala.
- ☞ When a team has no more stones left in its bowls, the game is over. The team with stones left in its bowls moves the stones to its mancala.
- ☞ The team with the most stones in its mancala wins.

And the Question Is.



- ☞ Arrange 25 small envelopes (can be found in a teacher supply store) in 5 columns of 5 envelopes each. Number the envelopes in each column from top to bottom as 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25.
- ☞ Each column is a different category, such as angels, prophets, Old Testaments, etc. Or you could make it a review, with the categories being the last 5 stories you have discussed.
- ☞ Write 5 questions of increasing difficulty for each category. Put the least difficult question for the category in the envelope numbered 5, the next hardest question for that category in the number 10 envelope and so on, with the most difficult question being placed in the number 25 envelope.

- ☞ Divide the children into two or three teams.
- ☞ Have the children pick a category and the number of points they want to go for. Explain that the difficulty of the question increases as the points increase.
- ☞ If the team answers correctly, they get the points.
- ☞ If the team answers incorrectly, the other team gets a chance to answer the question and get the points.
- ☞ The team that accumulates the most points wins.

Use Visual Aids. Prepare a wall-sized version of the Challenge activity, such as memorizing the Ten Commandments. List the books of the Bible on the wall. Print out the clip art and hang it on the wall to remind the children of what they have learned. Or let the children draw pictures of what they learned and hang those on the wall.

Use Individual Activities. Schedule at least one activity each Sunday that will require each child to learn individually. Each student can say the memory verse alone during a relay race. Or each student can draw a picture or write in a journal.

Watch a movie. There are a number of good short movies (20 to 50 minutes) that tell the story of a Biblical character or event.

Use role play to act out the story. Write each of the parts on a separate card using words the children can read.

Play Bible Detective. For example, let the children discover words they can use to praise God in **Prayer**. Provide a list of verses they can read to find the words. Write their discoveries on the board. Use this approach for other activities, such as learning about a person in People of the Bible or foods of the Bible in Life in Biblical Times.

Using Creative Teaching Methods

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Giant Game Floor Mat - Children's Games Digital Downloads

<https://www.lifeway.com/en/product/giant-game-floor-mat-children-s-games-digital-downloads-P005830426>

Children who are doing something retain 75 to 90 percent of what they learn as compared to 5 to 10 percent of what they hear or 20 to 30 percent of what they see. Creative teaching methods enhance the benefits of activity learning.

Creative teaching methods:

- Help children express their feelings in ways in which words do not.
- Encourage original and independent thinking.
- Encourage a child to invest himself in the learning.

Some creative teaching methods include drama, music, simulations, and learning games. All require active participation. Simulations is a teaching method you may want to try in your quest to find a better way to teach.

Simulations are pretend situations that enable a child to:

- Discover a way he might respond.
- Probe emotions he might experience.
- Evaluate behavior from different points of view.

Children of any age can pretend to be in a school environment inviting other boys and girls to church. One child can pretend to invite another to church while the second child gives an excuse for why he cannot come. Others in the group can help the first child think of ways to deal with the excuse. Children can trade parts and decide how to deal with different excuses.

Other suggestions might be for children who already are Christians to practice telling others how to become a Christian or for children to practice resisting temptation while in a safe environment.

Simulations can help children understand biblical times. Recently, a first-grader hurried into our Sunday School room asking "Are we going anywhere today?" You might think we regularly take field trips, but the only trips we take are those in our imaginations. We have toured Solomon's temple, and, on a bus trip, scouted out the land where Jesus lived.

Plan simulations based on the ages and abilities of the children you teach. Children of different ages enjoy simulations on different levels. Younger children may be quite willing to simulate a bus trip with rows of chairs, while older boys and girls will want to be more realistic.

Preparing To Teach

As always, start with prayer. Ask God to help you expand your teaching expertise and to guide you in the best use of teaching methods.

- Think about the children you teach. What learning styles do they exhibit? Note which children seem to be verbal, visual, logical, physical, musical, natural, relational or reflective learners. Consider the needs of the children as you choose how to teach.
- Try at least one new teaching method each quarter. Look at the curriculum for the focus age you teach. Circle an activity that uses a teaching method you have never or rarely used. Read it several times. Ask other teachers who have tried similar activities for their suggestions to help the activity flow smoothly. Set a time when you plan to use this method.

Enjoy teaching the activity and then evaluate the experience. Did children learn as you intended? What would you do differently if you were to do the activity again? Talking about these experiences with a group of children's leaders can help the entire group improve teaching.

Look at the Possibilities!

Following is a list of 57 possible methods. And, that list of methods does not include the variations within these teaching techniques.

- Agree/Disagree Statements
- Assignments
- Book Reports/Reviews
- Brainstorming
- Buzz Groups
- Case Studies
- Chain Reaction Forum
- Choral Reading/Speaking
- Circle Response
- Colloquy
- Computer
- Crafts
- Debate
- Demonstration
- Discussion
- Drama
- Drawing
- Drills
- Exhibits & Displays
- Field Trip
- Film/Video Talkback
- Fingerplays
- Forum
- Games
- Guided Conversation
- Inductive Bible Study
- Interview / Interview Forum
- Learning Centers
- Lecture
- Listening Activities
- Mime / Pantomime
- Modeling
- Monologue
- Music
- Neighbor Nudge
- Object Lesson
- Object Manipulation
- Panel Discussion
- Picture Methodology
- Play
- Projects
- Puppets
- Puzzles
- Question/Answer
- Reaction Panel

- Research & Report
- Role Play
- Screened Speech
- Simulation
- Storytelling
- Story Playing
- Symposium
- Testing
- Word Association/Reaction
- Work Group
- Workshop
- Writing