

“Handbook Game Room”
Developed by
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Contributors to this article are Jean Branton, David Branton, and Nick Frasher. Jean originally developed the concept several years ago and Nick was a volunteer Listener. When Jean moved into the position of Sparks Director, Nick took her position as Game Room Leader. Nick has since become Club Commander. David is a veteran Sparks Leader and substitute Leader in the Reciting Room.

Handbook Game Room was designed with consideration of guiding principles of Awana:

- Children come to Awana to play games
- Behavioral problems result when clubbers are not engaged and having fun
- God’s Word is fun
- Positive award system
- Clubbers who are properly paced complete a handbook in the Club year

Our goals for Sparks are:

- A majority of clubbers coming ready to recite
- Clubbers who are properly paced so they complete their handbooks before year end **and** also review their handbooks so the verses are well-set in their memory.
- Clubbers excited about God’s Word.
- Minimal behavioral problems.
- Clubbers able to use the verses they have memorized outside of the text of the handbook.
- Parents hearing the Word of God by being involved with their child’s handbook.
- More time for reciting scripture than the normal two hour club provides.

Handbook Basics:

Children who come to Handbook time fall into two categories:

1. Ready to Recite
2. Need to Study

Our Sparks club is designed with 3 rooms:

Reciting room – staffed with 1 veteran Sparks Leaders and 5-6 volunteers who have been trained to be “listeners” and serve only for 45 minutes

Study room – staffed with 2 to 4 leaders

Game room – staffed with 1 leader who has the skill level and enthusiasm of a good Game Director.

This position requires preparation. When leadership is available, a helper assists.

Positive Award System by which we achieve our goals:

- Club begins at 4:00; doors open at 3:45. Sparks arriving between 3:45 and 4:00 receive \$1 Awana Buck. We have Sparks waiting in line at 3:45, which provides for 45 minutes of reciting time. (Our goal achieved: More time for reciting scripture.)
- After checking-in, Clubbers who are ready to recite immediately get in line in the hallway to wait for their turn in the Reciting Room. Clubbers receive \$1 Awana Buck for each section recited.
- If a parent has initialed the section (as an indication that the clubber knows the section), the clubber receives an additional Awana Buck. (Our goal achieved: Parental involvement.)
- Clubbers who complete two or more sections receive a ticket to enter the Game Room. Some opt to return to the Study Room if their goal is to recite again that evening. Clubbers completing only one section return to the study room to continue working on their handbooks. They may still return to the Recite Room and meet the goal of two sections so they can earn a ticket to the Game Room.
- Surprise Bonus: On several Awana Store nights, we have given double bucks for word-perfect recitation.

The **Reciting Room** is staffed by 1 veteran Sparks Leader and 5+ volunteer Listeners who serve for 45 minutes and leave. Listeners hear clubbers recite and complete recordkeeping forms. Listeners consult with the veteran Leader with questions or for clarification. Before exiting the room, Clubbers stop at the veteran Leader's station with handbook and form. The veteran Leader quality controls the form with the handbook and immediately issues awards. This achieves a high percentage of accuracy in record-keeping, and identifies Listeners who need additional training. This also provides immediate gratification to Clubbers; there are no lost Awards; and no storing of awards for weeks until the Clubber returns. In the third segment of club at the end of large group time when parents are present, the Director calls Clubbers forward by name and they are recognized (by groups) for the awards earned that evening.

The **Game Room** is staffed by 1 leader who has the skill level and enthusiasm of a good game director. An assistant is helpful about halfway through Handbook Time.

Clubbers may use the 3 B's (Their **B**ible, *handB*ook, and **B**rain)

First ½ (20 min.): Clubbers are straggling in after sections have been recited. They are engaged in small group or individual games. The atmosphere is quieter.

Examples of activity:

Jigsaw puzzles of the Books of the Bible

Singing books of the Bible

Group reciting of a scripture passage to come in a later Red Jewel.

Hangman.

Games using the wipe-erase board. (resource books widely available)

Second ½ (20 min.): Most Clubbers have arrived. They are divided into teams for competitive games. The atmosphere is high-spirited and active. By the end of Handbook Time, ¾ of the Club is in this room. (Our goals achieved: Clubbers come ready to recite. Clubbers are excited about God's Word.)

Examples of activity:

Quizzing with handbooks materials. Clubbers may use the 3 B's (Bible, Book, & Brain). For more action and excitement, an overhead with game sheet can be used, where token is removed to reveal points earned per correct answer.

Unscramble scripture verses. For more action, a relay can be added where clubbers are in line and run to bucket and retrieve a card. When all cards are retrieved, the team works together to put the verse in order.

A "Games for Handbook Game Room" handout is attached, which I use at conference to stimulate ideas.

(Our goals achieved: Clubbers are engaged and having fun, therefore minimal behavioral problems. Clubbers are able to use the verses they have memorized outside of the context of the handbook.)

Results representative of our Club:

We have 39 regular Sparks and are 2/3rd way through the club year.

26 Handbooks Completed (Our goal achieved: Clubbers are well-paced.)

17 Handbooks Reviewed (+2 more working on their Review) (Our goal is being achieved.)

7 Workbooks Completed (+7 more working on Workbooks)

4 have completed TruthScripts – Psalms 1

4 have completed TruthScripts – Psalms 23

2 have completed ABC book

3 are in the ABC book

2 are in Bible Bee's book

TruthScripts passages recited by Clubber Parents:

5 parents @ 2 passages ea.; 2 parents @ 1 passage ea.

(TruthScripts is not currently a club-wide or church program, but was introduced in January in Sparks Club as extra material.)