

How To Have The Best Game Time

1. Don't "Wing It"

Have a plan. Think about what games you want to play and what you need to play those games. Just because it's game time doesn't mean that YOU shouldn't take your responsibility seriously.

2. Know the rules and explain them clearly.

Make sure that you know exactly how the game is played and that you have given some thought to how you are going to explain it to kids. Your explanation should be as quick as possible and should convey ALL of the rules of the game. Do not assume that they know, or remember, how to play even if you just played the game last week. My own personal policy is that I will not explain the rules until everyone has stopped talking. First, this is a principal they would do well to learn. More importantly, it is the kids who are talking who will ask 47 questions about what you just explained if you try to talk over them. Finally, have someone demonstrate the game as you are explaining the rules. This will help with the visual learners in your group.

3. Exude Confidence and Excitement

Whether you think the game will succeed or flop, your demeanor should be one of confidence in the game and excitement about the chance to let the kids play it. There is truth to the old adage that excitement is contagious. Do not mutter or whisper. Speak up. Have fun. Enjoy the time, and the kids are likely to follow your lead.

4. You Can Not Make Everyone Happy All the Time

This was a real eye opener for me. Once I accepted this fact, it made Game Time more fun for me and for the kids. There will always be some kids who do not like the game you are playing, and most of the time, these are the most vocal kids in the group. Kids will invariably complain that they were wronged or someone else cheated. Make it clear ahead of time that the leaders' word go. If a leader says you're out, you're out. If a leader says team A won, they won no matter what the kids on team B think they saw.

5. It's Not OK to Ignore a Kid, but it OK to ignore their Suggestions and Complaints

Never ever ignore a child. Our role in working with kids, even if we're "just" running games, is to shine the light of Jesus into that child's life. We can't do that by ignoring them. However, there is nothing

that says once you've listened to them that you have to accept all of their suggestions and complaints. Be open to them, their feedback is as valid as anyone else's, but evaluate things for yourself. Don't scrap a game because a handful of kids think it's childish and don't play the same game every week because it's the favorite of a handful of the kids. You are there to be the games leader – so lead.

6. Stick to the Rules

You should know the rules and the game beforehand and explain them to the kids. If you need to make some slight adjustments for fairness sake or because something isn't working, feel free to do that. However, generally you should stick to the rules as you originally outlined them. This is less confusing for you and for the kids!

7. Make the Boys Run

Boys have energy. Boys have lots and lots and lots of energy. Running is a great way to work off some of that energy. I start out most game times these days by having the boys run a little bit. If the game is not that physically active I have them run a little bit more than usual. If they're huffing and puffing, it's harder for them to talk while I'm trying to explain the rules too.

8. Have a Backup Plan

Sometimes that game that looks so awesome on paper fizzles out when you start to play it with the kids. You should always have a backup plan. What game are you going to do if the your original plan falls through? If you were going outside to play and it rains, what will you do inside? The kids may never know that you have a backup plan, but they will know if need one and don't have it.

9. Don't Take It Too Seriously

It's games! Don't lose sight of that. Games are meant to be fun. Game time, especially in a church setting, should be about building relationships. Don't take games so seriously, or your position of games director so seriously, that you lose sight of having fun.

10. Play With Them When Possible

Ministry is all about relationships and games are no different. When you can, and when it is appropriate, play with the kids. Join one the teams and become an active participant in the game. It will take your relationship with the kids to a new level.