

T&T Clubber Characteristics

Working with children can be frustrating if you don't understand their development. These characteristics and guidelines should help:

Third and Fourth Grade

Physically

Third- and fourth-graders are growing steadily, not in spurts. Their finer muscles are developing, and they are active and energetic.

- Plan activities for those who come to club early.
- Keep Game Time moving quickly with several games, not just two or three. Repeat familiar games, and include new games and variations of old games each week.
- Keep Handbook Time well-organized as a structured teaching time. If Handbook Time is disorganized, clubbers will goof off.
- Begin song time with active songs. Later, shift to less active songs that prepare clubbers for the Large Group Time Bible lesson.
- Keep the Large Group Time Bible lesson interesting, short (no longer than 15 minutes) and clear.
- Keep equipment and supplies for activities ready in advance.

Mentally

Third- and fourth-graders usually can read and are beginning to reason. They memorize easily, but do not understand symbolism.

- Plan review games and creative activities to encourage clubbers' learning skills.
- Help clubbers think through verses they are learning. Ask them to rephrase verses in their own words.
- Brainstorm creative ways to motivate clubbers to memorize.
- Publicly recognize clubbers who achieve.
- Plan quizzes and games that help clubbers review what they have learned.
- Help clubbers learn and understand difficult material.
- Keep accurate records in order to award clubbers in a timely fashion.
- Tell Bible and true-to-life stories clubbers can relate to.
- Use visual aids to help clubbers understand what you are teaching.

Emotionally

Third- and fourth-graders are learning to control their emotions, but they may cry when they get hurt or are overtired. They also assert their individuality, are learning to make their own choices and fear failure.

- Don't react in anger or disappointment if clubbers occasionally display outbursts of anger, frustration, pouting or tears. Separate the troubled clubber from the group and allow time for him or her to settle down.

- Maintain discipline. Expect clubbers to conform to group structure.
- Respect each clubber, regardless of his or her behavior. Love clubbers for who they are, not for what they do.
- Take a few minutes to chat with individual clubbers before, during and after club.
- Offer opportunities for clubbers to make choices. For example, plan a favorites night.
- Encourage clubbers to make choices to please the Lord. Encourage them to study and memorize God's Word.
- Plan games and activities so clubbers will have opportunities to succeed in different ways.
- Offer a variety of games that allow different clubbers to excel.
- Encourage clubbers to do their best, whether they win or lose.
- Motivate positively, not negatively. For example, give points to teams with well-behaved clubbers, instead of taking off points from teams with badly-behaved clubbers.

Socially

Third- and fourth-graders accept adults as authority figures and seek their approval. Children at this age like to have best friends, usually of the same gender, and they change best friends often. They enjoy humor but sometimes use it to hurt others.

- Give clubbers attention during club meetings.
- Show your acceptance by calling clubbers on the phone, visiting their homes, sending cards, etc. Make sure to seek parents' permission before you contact clubbers outside church.
- Praise clubbers during Game Time whether they win or lose.
- Introduce new clubbers to Jesus Christ, a Friend who will never leave or forsake them (Hebrews 13:5).
- Teach clubbers to use appropriate humor.

Spiritually

Third- and fourth-graders identify sin as sin. They understand salvation and that Jesus Christ can be their Savior. Clubbers are quick to notice when words and actions are inconsistent.

- Encourage clubbers to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Know how to lead them to Christ. Consider using evangelism resources available in the *Awana Ministry Guide*.
- Check your life for inconsistencies. Be a consistent, godly example.
- Teach clubbers to look to Christ for the perfect example of how to live, and to study God's Word for Christian living principles.
- Teach clubbers the authority of Scripture as a guide for life. Remember, the Bible is God's Word. Help clubbers read, study, memorize and apply God's Word to their lives.
- Teach clubbers to pray. Encourage them to share prayer requests and praise God for His answers.

Fifth and Sixth Grade

Physically

Fifth- and sixth-graders are strong, healthy and active. They are becoming competitive, but often are afraid of failure. They notice physical accomplishments of others and compare themselves to others. Fifth- and sixth-graders also are beginning to experience physical changes that cause them to be noisy and restless. Boys love to wrestle and fight. Fifth-graders may be in a period of slower growth just before the adolescent spurt in the sixth through eighth grades.

- Play active games and progress rapidly from one game to the next.
- Involve each clubber; try not to let them be spectators.
- Expect regular club attendance.
- Challenge clubbers with activities that expand their abilities in speed, control and endurance.
- Use team competition throughout each club segment.
- Recognize clubbers for specific abilities. Help each one develop.
- Provide constructive activities with goals to accomplish.
- Include an occasional tournament in club activities.
- Involve each clubber in activities as soon as he or she arrives at club.
- Encourage shouting and cheering in games, in response to award presentations and for other appropriate activities.
- Clubbers will become bored if your meeting drags, equipment is not ready or leaders are not prepared.

Mentally

Fifth- and sixth-graders have many interests but may not want to learn what an Awana leader expects. They are inquisitive and beginning to reason. Fifth- and sixth-graders have good memories; they enjoy reading about adventures and learning facts.

- Discover the interests of each clubber. Build on these interests by planning appropriate weekly meeting themes.
- Plan challenging riddles, puzzles and games of skill.
- Recognize that clubbers still are at an age where they will follow leaders' guidance.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will motivate each clubber to learn and understand His Word.
- Give clubbers freedom to ask questions. Help them discover answers to their questions.
- Make learning practical by correlating Bible teaching with hand-book learning.
- Recognize that memorizing the words of a Bible verse does not guarantee they have learned what the verse means.
- Teach them how to think through verse meanings.
- Use motivational techniques to encourage memorization.
- Require precise, accurate learning (no more than two helps per section).
- Encourage private, daily Bible reading of two or three suggested Bible verses. Provide specific suggestions of what to look for in each passage or questions to answer about each verse.

- Check out your local Christian bookstore for resources or devotional aids appropriate to this age.
- Provide Christian fiction. Consider setting up a library corner where clubbers can borrow books.

Emotionally

Fifth- and sixth-graders enjoy humor, but they are not totally carefree – they often worry. They are hard on themselves when they make mistakes. These clubbers often object to outward displays of affection, yet they need to feel loved. Given the opportunity, fifth- and sixth-graders will share their problems. They are learning to control their emotions, but they may be quick-tempered and occasionally object to club structure.

- Be humorous, and don't be afraid to be laughed at yourself. Fifth- and sixth-graders need to learn to laugh at themselves.
- Include skits and jokes during your meetings. Laugh and have fun in club.
- Arrive early so you can spend an extra few minutes with clubbers.
- Plan a variety of activities so different clubbers will be able to exercise their skills.
- While at club, try to make sure each clubber receives the personal attention he or she needs.
- Be available to clubbers who want to share their problems and seek advice.
- Recognize that some clubbers may complain of illness to get out of Game Time.
- Be patient with clubbers who question your authority.
- Be prepared for short bursts of temper, and don't make them into big deals.

Socially

Fifth- and sixth-graders are hero worshipers. They admire musicians, TV personalities, sports figures and others. They desire to be independent but seek the approval of parents and peers. They can be responsible. They love to belong. Fifth- and sixth-graders usually say they dislike the opposite sex (although girls are beginning to notice boys). Most girls think boys are rough, while most boys consider girls silly.

- Promote Christian musicians, missionaries and other men and women in Christian service as alternatives to secular heroes.
- Promote Bible characters as real people who served the Lord. Set their sights on Jesus Christ as the perfect example of how to live.
- Involve clubbers in planning activities, projects and service opportunities.
- Plan separate activities from third- and fourth-graders.
- Make clubbers feel important as members of a team.
- Praise those who cooperate instead of chiding those who don't.
- Focus on making club a place where clubbers want to bring their friends.

Spiritually

Fifth- and sixth-graders often have sincere questions about Christianity (although most have not yet reached the “age of doubt”). Because they feel independent, they feel responsible for their sins. Fifth- and sixth-graders are learning to think conceptually. They may have sincere love for God, but need encouragement and discipline for personal growth.

- Encourage clubbers to accept Jesus Christ as Savior. Fifth- and sixth-graders are capable of understanding God’s plan of salvation.
- Encourage clubbers to overcome temptation through daily Bible study and prayer. The Bible contains answers to their many questions.
- Teach them Bible doctrine.
- Be sure each clubber has his or her own Bible.
- Teach them how to have a daily quiet time. Provide necessary materials for them to have an effective quiet time.
- Help each one make and keep a prayer list.
- Pray together as a team.