

## What is Discipline?

The root meaning of the word *discipline*, is *disciple*. When we discipline clubbers, we are helping them to become disciples. The purpose of discipline is to teach acceptable behavior, not merely a set of rules. Punishment is concerned with the offense, but discipline strives to mold clubbers into more godly individuals. Effective discipline results in an organized, well-behaved club.

## Importance of Discipline

In Awana, discipline is positive. Instead of emphasizing punishment for misbehavior, positive discipline encourages good behavior through rewards. Good team behavior may be rewarded with team points and additional incentives may be offered for handbook achievement. Compliments and other forms of praise encourage young clubbers to follow the rules. Clubbers quickly learn that conforming to club standards is in their best interest.

## The Opening Ceremony Establishes a Disciplined Atmosphere

The opening ceremony is important because it effectively establishes an attitude of discipline. The weekly club meeting begins with the opening ceremony. This consists of the pledge to your country's flag, the pledge to the Awana flag, recitation of key verses for the respective clubs, an Awana Theme Song, and an opening prayer.

Before the meeting begins, choose two clubbers to be the flag bearers. These should be clubbers who are progressing in the program and dressed in the Awana uniform. Show them how to hold the flags. They must understand the commands and know where to stand. It is an honor to be a flag bearer. Choose a leader to open in prayer each week.

## Sample Opening Ceremony.

The ceremony should be simple and brief and it should proceed as follows:

Clubbers and leaders line up on their designated team color lines on the Awana Square. The flag bearers are positioned at each corner of the square (as shown in the diagram). To show respect for your nation's flag, the Awana flag should be held lower than your country's flag. When the Commander or a designated leader gives the command "Attention!" clubbers and leaders stand at attention, hands at their sides, and face the center of the square.

When the command is given to "Present colors!" the flag bearers advance to the center of the circle, stop a few feet apart, and face each other.

At the command "Right hand salute!" clubbers and leaders place their right hands over their hearts (or other gesture appropriate to saluting your country's flag). Leaders and clubbers, except the flag bearers, salute the flags by pledging allegiance to the country's flag, then to the Awana flag.

The Awana Pledge: "I pledge allegiance to the Awana flag, which stands for the Awana Clubs, whose goal is to reach boys and girls with the gospel of Christ and train them to serve Him."

After the pledges, the command "Order Arms!" is given. Clubbers and leaders come to attention with hands at their sides.

At the command "Post colors!" the flag bearers march to the flag stands where the Awana flag is posted first, followed by the country's flag.

To conclude the opening ceremony, clubbers and leaders recite their respective club key verses in unison. (Note that the pledges and club key verses are included in the Entrance Booklet for each club. These are learned and recited during Handbook Time as part of the qualifications to become a club member.)

A brief prayer for the club meeting serves both to close the opening ceremony and to start the rest of the club activities.

## The Five-count Controls Group Attention

One of the best ways to teach acceptable group behavior is through the five-count. Although this important tool is used most frequently during Game Time, **the five-count may be used any time during club. The person in charge gives the five-count by slowly counting to five in a firm, authoritative manner loud enough to be heard by all. Before the count has reached "Five!" there should be absolute silence.** In a Game Time setting, by the count of "five," clubbers are silent and lined up straight on their color line.

## Positive Points Encourage Cooperation

Good conduct is rewarded by giving additional points to teams that cooperate. For example, awarding points to the team that lines up the quickest or that responds the fastest to a five-count encourages other teams to line up quickly as well. If one team is not re-

sponding properly, you may give points to the other teams that are obeying. Because the rest of the team wants to earn points, this approach applies social peer pressure on the one or two unruly clubbers. This directs attention to the positive behavior, rather than to the negative. A positive approach of awarding points for good behavior is almost always preferable to deducting points for misbehavior. However, sometimes points are deducted as a stronger means of discipline.

### **The Three-count Handles Individual Rebellion**

Some clubbers may not be able to adjust to a good system of order. Leaders must not allow such clubbers to ruin a club meeting.

**If clubbers continue to misbehave after repeated correction and are indifferent when their team loses points, the three-count system is used.** This system is used to deal with individual rebellion. The misbehaving clubber is pointed out and given a “one” by the Club Director or the leader in charge of that particular segment of club. Then the leader explains what will happen if the clubber receives a “two” or “three.”

The next time the clubber misbehaves, a “two” is given. The Club Director and a leader take the clubber to another room for counsel. (If these two are not available, one leader should take the clubber to an area removed from club activity, but clearly visible to other leaders.)

*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Galatians 6:1a*

Make sure that the misbehaving clubber has been treated fairly and understands the rules and what is wrong. Allow the clubber to explain the misbehavior. Encourage cooperation for the benefit of both the clubber and the team. This cooperation will help the clubber gain the friendship of the other team members.

If a third offense necessitates a “three,” the misbehaving clubber is taken home to the parents. The leader explains to the parents why the discipline was necessary. Both the clubber and the parents should understand that the clubber is welcome back once the clubber’s conduct meets club standards. (If taking a clubber home is not possible, remove the clubber from club to another room for the remainder of club time.)

A Sparkie who is given a three-count should not be taken home. Rather, the Sparkie should be counseled away from the group. Visiting the child’s home within a few days may give insights concerning the child’s troublesome behavior.

When the three-count system is administered, it has a sobering effect on other clubbers. In subsequent club meetings, the first “one” should bring positive results. However, if a boy or girl continues to misbehave week after week, a leader should talk with the clubber’s parents. Often, they can encourage their child to cooperate in club. If these efforts, backed by prayer, do not result in appropriate behavior, **the clubber should not be permitted to return to club.**

### **Achieving Consistent and Realistic Discipline**

These points give practical suggestions for achieving good discipline:

**Administer positive discipline with a positive goal in view.** Clubbers want to cooperate because they know it contributes to a happy, pleasant atmosphere. A clubber who persists in breaking rules should face consequences that produce future cooperation so that activities are not spoiled for the entire group.

**Establish club rules with penalties for infractions.** The Commander, Club Directors, and leaders should agree together on the standard of acceptable conduct. Never make a rule that is unnecessary or impossible to obey or enforce. Once the rules have been established, each leader must help enforce the rules and encourage clubbers to follow them.

**Establish the Club Director as the primary club disciplinarian.** Although all leaders should encourage good behavior, the Club Director is responsible for maintaining the standards of discipline and reprimanding a clubber if necessary. If a particular leader-clubber relationship is strained, the Club Director should reassign the clubber to another leader in the hope of establishing a better relationship.

**Ensure that all rules are uniform throughout all Awana Clubs.** Enforce the rules fairly and consistently from week to week and from person to person. Each leader, clubber, and newcomer must know the rules, understand how they will be enforced, and know what the penalties are for breaking the rules. Therefore, rules should be announced, explained, and posted. For Sparkies, gently and firmly remind

them often of acceptable standards of club behavior. Administer penalties impartially. Never discipline in anger. Give clubbers a fair hearing when someone calls their actions into question. Don't be afraid to admit when you're wrong. Admitting you've made a mistake will win clubber respect.

**Encourage good conduct by personal example.** The personal example of leaders is important in maintaining good club discipline. When leaders complain, argue, or talk out of place, the disciplinary system of the club is weakened.

**Establish standards of discipline for times of transition.** If disorder is allowed when clubbers move from one segment of the club meeting to another, it will be more difficult to quiet the clubbers at the beginning of the next segment. It is better to dismiss groups one at a time than to allow all to move together. Leaders should accompany their groups and maintain order at all times.

**Recognize that various degrees of noise and quiet are acceptable** during different parts of a club meeting. Handbook Time is more informal than Council Time, but not nearly as informal as Game Time.

**Make discipline a matter of prayer and discussion in the leaders' prayer and planning meetings.** Disorder can be one of Satan's most effective tools for defeating a leader or a clubber. Pray specifically for each discipline problem.

*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:11*

### Special Caution

Often when clubbers do a good job, leaders like to reward them with a hug or other form of physical affection. Be cautious about physical contact with your clubbers. Because of the rise of awareness of sexual abuse in our society, even harmless forms of physical contact may appear questionable to others and may be disturbing to clubbers, especially those who have experienced abuse in the past.

### Avoiding Discipline Problems

**Proper planning and preparation are necessary to avoid discipline problems.** When problems occur, they are usually not the clubbers' fault. The difficulties are almost always due to the failure of the leaders to assume their responsibilities. These are some factors that contribute to poor conduct:

**Starting club late.** Maintaining the established time schedule is of great importance. Leaders should arrive early so they can greet clubbers as they arrive. It is difficult to regain order if there has been a period of waiting or undirected activity. When club starts on time, the schedule can be kept and club can end on time.

**Lack of preparation.** Each Club Director and leader must be faithful in performing their assigned duties. The meeting area should be clean and neat, game equipment ready to use, and chairs set up ahead of time. The lighting and ventilation should be adequate. Do not ask the clubbers, "What shall we play?" or "Who's going to . . . ?"

**Meetings that drag.** In addition to keeping to the schedule, enthusiastic participation by each leader is necessary to keep the meeting alive. When leaders show their interest in club activities, the clubbers pay more attention and behave better.

Good discipline is a major factor in having a successful club, so start your club year with high standards and keep them high. It takes considerable effort to establish an orderly club, but the effort is always worthwhile and rewarding.