



How Do I Get Kids into Small Groups?

Using Free Time and Clean Up to Lead Small

Building your small group starts a long time before you sit together in small groups! These tips and tricks can make breaking up into small groups easier when the time comes.

Welcome Kids

Konnect is a big room. The lights, sounds, and people in it can be overwhelming. Welcome kids so they know they fit in, they know what to do, and they know who to go to if they need help.

- **Keep an eye on the door.** Watch to make sure every kid is greeted warmly by name when they enter Konnect. If nobody else greets them, welcome them yourself.
- **Connect kids.** Once you greet a kid, ask what grade they're in and introduce them to their small group leader. That way, they'll know where they fit in and who can take care of them.
- **Reconnect kids.** Do you see a kid who was greeted, but is now alone? Go talk with them and see how you can get them reconnected with other kids, with play, or even just talking with you!

Have Fun

When the first interaction kids have with you is through play, it's easier for kids to trust you and base their relationship with you on something positive.

- **Ways to Play**
 - Time kids on the rock wall to see how fast they can climb from one side to the other.
 - Challenge kids to climb the rock wall using only one color, and watch them.
 - Organize a video game tournament with a small group of kids.
 - Create dance moves to dance along with the music that plays in between services.
 - Pull out a toy or game that's in the room and invite kids to play it with you.
 - Play games like Simon Says, Telephone, Charades, or I Spy with a few kids.

Set Boundaries

Setting healthy boundaries from the get-go helps kids respect boundaries for the rest of the experience. But what are healthy boundaries, and how do you set them?

- **Remember, you're in charge of safety.** When you see an inappropriate activity (even if another leader got it started) respectfully end it and get kids busy with something else.
- **Know which activities aren't appropriate.** Running, yelling, throwing things, wrestling, tickling, picking kids up, sitting in laps, swinging kids around, restraining kids, kids climbing on leaders or each other, using abusive language or gestures, kids playing in the tech booth, or any other activities causing a distraction or safety problem are not appropriate in the Konnect room.

- **Redirect.** When you see an inappropriate behavior or activity, get the attention of the involved kids respectfully, explain the activity isn't allowed in Konnect, and give the kids a few choices of appropriate activities they can do instead. Do the activity they choose with them.
- **Reinforce clean up.** If kids are trying to play or get more things out when the countdown timer begins, remind them free time is over and help them find their small group leader.

Get Kids into Small Groups

You've spent your whole free time setting the stage for small groups—now how do you get the kids to actually sit in them? Here are some tips to clearly lead kids so they know where they need to be.

- **Emcees**
 - While the countdown timer runs, announce the names of each small group leader, have them raise their hand up high, and remind kids which grade sits with that leader.
 - Repeat the process if you still have a lot of kids wandering when the timer is over.
- **Small Group Leaders**
 - Once the countdown timer begins, locate all of the kids who are in your small group.
 - Sit in the same area of the room every single week so kids can find you easily.
 - Listen for cues from the emcee and follow them.
- **Coaches**
 - Once the countdown timer is over, find any kids who are not yet in a small group and walk them kindly to their small group.

Help Kids

- **Kids Who Aren't in Small Groups:** If a kid isn't in a small group after clean up, don't make the small group leader leave their group to go get them. An emcee or a coach can respectfully sit down next to them and talk them through the reasons they have for not joining a small group.
- **Bathroom Breaks**
 - **Do** follow LifeKids policy and have two adult leaders help kids who ask for a bathroom break.
 - **Don't** make a bathroom break announcement to the whole group. Too many kids in the hallway breaks down security and makes kids miss out on small group time.
- **Deal with challenging behavior gently.** If a kid you are trying to redirect becomes aggravated, aggressive, or noncompliant, stay calm and ask a coach or LifeKids staff member for help. *Find more tips in the video and discussion guide "How Do I Deal with Challenging Behavior?"*

Talk It Over

1. How do you think managing free time well contributes to successful small group formation?
2. What strategies do you use that work well for redirecting kids from inappropriate activities to appropriate ones?
3. What is your biggest challenge when free time is over and it's time to form small groups?
4. Talk to a few other leaders, a coach, or a LifeKids staff member about your challenges. What solutions did you come up with?

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