

ABC's and 1-2-3's of Preschool Classroom Discipline

Introduction

What comes to your mind when you think of preschool children and classroom discipline?

Perhaps, what discipline? You see little ones wandering all over the room picking and choosing what toy or activity interests them only to move to the next one in 2-3 minutes?

Yes, learning stations and free – play is a major part of preschool learning but these tips and simple techniques we've learned along the way will help you have an effective 15- 30-minute Bible time. Let's start with our A-B-C-s!

A: **Always** provide structure. Preschool children thrive with a structure environment.

- a. **Always** begin with the familiar and move to the unfamiliar
- b. **A** schedule is vital!
- c. **Always** start with prayer at beginning of the class time and end. **Also**, cover your class in prayer before you arrive)
- d. **Arrive** at the best time for the class. Learning centers are on tight schedules, finding the best time for the center, classroom, and teacher makes all the difference in the world.

B: **Believe** the **Best** of each child.

- a. Be on the look-out for praise moments. Preschool children thrive with praise. Praise them often.
- b. **Boundaries** need to be set, give simple rules. Examples:
 - i. Criss Cross, Applesauce, God is **Boss!** (For sitting control)
 - ii. Catch a **bubble!** (For mouth control)
 - iii. Give stickers for good **behavior** to entire class. Note: Some authorities disapprove of a reward system. However, our purpose is that stickers are incentives for good behavior. By following the up rules, they will learn scripture, songs, and memory verses that will benefit them for life! Even God uses rewards! (Hebrews 11:6, Rev. 22:12)

C: Be **Creative**

- a. **Children** LOVE stories, songs, games, pictures, silly stuff
- b. **Choose** preschool appropriate language, lessons, and activities.
 - i. Remember: they are literally minded, they don't like competition



C. **Charlie** to the rescue! Charlie is my classroom mascot. He helps me watch the children to make sure they're following the rules. At the end of Bible time, he rewards each child with a sticker. So, have a class mascot!

Now it's time for our 1-2-3's:

1. There's only **1** disciplinarian. Too many bosses can become confusing for a child. The classroom teacher is the disciplinarian. In preschool learning centers, the teacher **MUST** stay in the classroom with you. The classroom teacher handles any disciplinary action. Respect the teacher's authority (even if you disagree). Follow and respect the teacher's guidelines. We provide a form for the school describing our expectations of the services we provide in cooperation with the services the learning center/preschool provides.
 - a. States vary about rules, in Louisiana, all volunteers must follow the preschool learning centers screening guidelines.
 - b. Make sure the teacher understands that you need their help maintaining classroom order (the form explains this too).
 - c. I **ALWAYS** reward **EVERY** child with a sticker at the end of class time unless the teacher requests I do not.
 - d. If you are not teaching in a preschool learning environment and you are the authority. Keep your rules simple. Remind the children of the rules often. Recruit additional volunteers to help you maintain discipline by sitting with the children, participating in the class, making sure children are safe.
2. **2** by **2** please! Do not teach alone. **ALWAYS** have an additional teacher with you.
 - a. Unexpected needs may arise.
 - b. Four eyes are better than **2**. The assisting teacher can observe activity you may miss.
 - c. The **#2** teacher is available to assist you. Having a **2nd** set of hands helps the program go smoothly and orderly.
3. **3** important Words:
 - a. **Please**. Being polite teaches manners and treats little ones with respect
 - b. **Need**. Avoid power struggles with this simple little word. Instead of being demanding, letting a child know their actions are needed gives them a sense of value.
 - c. **Okay**. Even little ones like choices and control! By using the word okay, a child feels a sense of control. This also helps the child to feel valued.

Listen Teachers!



There are times when a teacher needs the children to listen carefully to instructions. Here are a few warnings I need you to listen carefully to maintain peace.

1. **Never** single out a child for “bad” behavior. Have you ever seen a child throw a fit? They are very good at it, and you do not want to disrupt your Bible time with an unhappy child! If a child is distracting the other children and you are the disciplinarian, get a volunteer teacher to assist you by taking the child aside (openly in the same classroom) and gently speaking with them.
2. **If you are the classroom authority:** Always reward stickers to all the children. If the class was a total disaster, just close in prayer without ever mentioning the stickers. If a child asks you about the stickers, tell them Charlie is saving them for later. (This too prevents a child or class from throwing a fit.)
3. **Autistic children:** You may experience an autistic child in your Bible time. Generally, the other children are not distracted by an autistic child. The autistic child may wander around the room while you are teaching but they are soaking things in – in their autistic way. The other children understand.

If you are the disciplinarian and not at a preschool or learning center:

- a. Recruit a volunteer to assist you with the autistic child.
- b. Make sure the child stays safe.
- c. Allow them to participate when they show a desire to participate.
- d. When using Gospel Fuzzie Gloves, a ball, or another item a child holds only temporarily, be prepared to allow the autistic child to hold the item until they are ready to hand the item back or get bored with it. (This is to avoid a Bible time power struggle). Have an extra ball, glove, or item available, in case this situation arises.

Conclusion

Yes, little kids are active and need LOTS of free-time with learning stations and hands-on activity. However, effective Bible programs will enhance the child’s whole day. The scripture, lessons, and songs they learn in Bible time can reinforced in the other activities.

