



Backyard Kids Club

Welcome to this year's Lifeway's Backyard Kids Club theme is *Twists and Turns*, a fantastical celebration of games of all kinds. From classic tabletop games to video games, kids will play their way through BKC while learning that Jesus guides them through all the twists and turns of their lives. The following will answer many of your questions about hosting BKC through your church and in your own neighborhoods!

Needed Resources

- *VBS 2023 Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide*
- *VBS 2023 Backyard Kids Club Kit*

1. Question 1: Why do BKC?

- Backyard Kids Club (BKC) is a way of expanding VBS to your community—going beyond the church walls to share the gospel!
- Research shows that 69% of all American parents would encourage their child to attend VBS at a church they don't attend if invited by a friend. When kids invite their neighborhood friends to BKC at their home, parents are overwhelmingly likely to say yes.

2. Question 2: Where can you hold a BKC?

- Matthew 28:19–20 says to Go and make disciples of all nations ... not stay in the church and let them come to you! It has become readily apparent over the past several years that going outside the church walls will be imperative if we are to win this generation and the next to Jesus.
- Backyard Kids Club is not limited to the backyard.
 - Other locations to host a BKC: Park, school, church member's home, neighborhood pool or clubhouse, mobile home park, government housing, mission trip, mission project, recreation center, church parking lot, restaurant, daycare center, or collaborate with another church.

3. Question 3: How do you use BKC?

- A successful Backyard Kids Club begins with two key resources—the *Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide* and the *Backyard Kids Club Kit*. Each church needs only ONE Directors Guide, even if hosting multiple BKC locations. Each location will need its own Backyard Kids Club Kit.

Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide:

**Refer to the Directors Guide*

The *Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide* has these key features:

- Outlines the biblical content. (Page 4)
- Assists in identify locations and timing (pages 6-8)
- Offers guidance in organizing a team (role summaries page 10), scheduling, planning checklists, registration tips, and continuing connections.

Backyard Kids Club Kit:

**Refer to the Kids Club Kit*

- Each folder in the Kit corresponds with a different role.

Team Leader: The Team Leader is the on-site director. He will provide the location and leadership for the BKC. The Leader will work with the team to set the date, schedule, and any kickoff or celebration dates.

Host: The host can also be the team leader, or the team leader can be another person on the BKC team. Ideally the host does not have any teaching responsibilities, so she is available for any needs that arise. The host must have the gift of hospitality—making people feel welcome and loved. Someone who cares more about her flowerbeds than kids is not a good host choice. Whenever possible, recruit hosts that are open to a 2–3-year commitment. It takes time to develop relationships. In some cases, it may take families 2–3 years of participating in a BKC before making a visit to the host church. The host’s main duties are publicity, registration, **snacks**, security, follow-up, communicating details back to the church staff.

Snacks: Snacks are usually the responsibility of the host. Plan for snacks to last 10 minutes.

- Keep in mind that many children have food allergies. Plan for allergen-free snacks
- Consider only serving water since BKC is usually outside. Watch for warning signs that children are overheated or dehydrated.
- Be sure to think through trash pickup. Tie a large bag to a tree or bring a large trashcan outside.
- Involve the church at large by asking other church members to provide snacks for the teams. Adults who may not be able to participate the week of BKC might love to shop, prepare, and deliver snacks to the host ahead of time.
- **Take every opportunity to teach. Snack time is a great time to review the Bible Stories and/or applications from Bible Study.**

Music/Worship Leader: Leads Opening Rally for 15 minutes and leads Closing Rally for 15 minutes.

- The Music Folder gives an outline for daily opening and closing rallies. A two-character skit is also provided. This helps tie in the theme each day and sets up Bible study. Consider asking older children or middle school/high school students to perform the skits.
- Choose leaders with high levels of enthusiasm and energy. The music/worship leader should be familiar enough with the songs and movements to teach them to the children each day.
- If technology is available at a BKC site, the music/worship leader may choose to show the performance videos on the DVD while leading songs.
- During Closing Rally, review the music from Opening Rally, the motto, and the memory verse. Use the Connection Questions included on the Closing Rally card to review the lesson. This can have a huge impact. Often parents arrive a little early. By reviewing everything at the end, parents can listen in on what their children learned. Parents who are already believers can continue the conversation with their child as they go home. Parents who are not believers will hopefully ask their children to explain what they learned!

Bible Study Leaders: Leads Bible Study for 30 minutes. Recruit Bible Study leaders for both preschool and children’s Bible studies. The daily Bible stories and applications are the same for BKC as the main VBS curriculum. Activities and games have been adapted to fit a broadly graded group of children and are easily portable and done outside. Teaching plans for both children and preschool are the same Bible story, but there are different activities based on comprehension levels and capabilities.

Consider the following tips for Bible Study:

- Think through sun versus shade. You do not want kids staring into the sun as they look at the leader.
- Provide clear physical boundaries. A flat sheet or blanket not only gives them something to sit on but also provides a visual boundary.
- Provide a cooler for the leader to sit on. Store supplies inside to prevent them from blowing away (other options include a large box, basket, or bag nearby).
- Ask other team members (Music, Rec, Crafts, etc.) to sit with the children during Bible Study time to assist the Bible Study leader and to help the children stay focused.

- Be spiritually and mentally prepared for distractions. Do not be surprised if a neighbor decides to mow the lawn or a hot air balloon goes overhead during Bible Study time.

Recreation Leader: Leads recreation for 25 minutes. Determines early arrival activities 15–20 minutes before starting BKC. Instructs leaders to be very familiar with the playing area. Watch for tree roots, little ditches, or other items that might be hazardous or cause safety concerns.

Consider the following tips for BKC recreation:

- Give very clear boundaries on how far kids may go during games. Consider stationing extra adults or student leaders at those boundaries.
- Determine in advance with the BKC team if recreation can include water or messy games.
- Select 3–4 games per day. It is better to have more prepared to fill extra time.
- End a game before the kids lose interest. You can always bring it back as an opening or closing game during drop off/pick up the next day.
- Evenly disperse younger and older children on each team when forming teams with broadly graded ages. For relay games, place the youngest children at the front of the line and older children at the back. This will help ensure that kids compete against others their own age.
- Give teams theme related names such as “Twisters” and “Turn Abouts” instead of calling them “Team 1” and “Team 2.”

Craft Leader: Leads crafts for 25 minutes. The BKC crafts are chosen for their suitability for outdoor use. Additional craft ideas are available in the *VBS 2023 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide*. Lifeway craft packs are great options because they come in kits that are easy to distribute.

Consider the following tips for BKC Crafts:

- Lead kids to stand around tables instead of sitting in chairs. (12 kids can stand around a table where only 6 chairs would fit.)
- Plan for wind! Place small items/crayons/markers in heavier bowls or cups to keep them from blowing away or rolling off the table.
- Provide a bucket of soapy water and a towel nearby if doing a messy craft. This will give children a place to clean their hands rather than needing to go inside to find a sink.
- Keep extra copies of the preschool Bible Study coloring pages on hand for children who finish early. Or have the Recreation Leader stand-by ready to play a favorite game again as kids finish their craft.
- Lead kids to place their finished craft near the pick-up area so they do not forget them when they leave.

4. **Question 5: Are there any challenges to doing BKC?**

- There are certain challenges to putting on a Backyard Kids Club. But, if they can be identified early, a solution can be put in place to minimize (or eliminate) them.
 - Over-stretching the first year — Start with a single site and expand at a comfortable rate.
 - Flexibility — Have a plan in place, but be prepared with options in additional children attend, weather changes, age groupings are lop-sided, etc.
 - Burn out — BKC is a great option where fewer volunteers can make a huge difference.
 - Registration — Sometimes children just “show up.” Enlist a volunteer to be in charge of connecting with the parents, older siblings, or neighbors who bring children so good information for follow up is gathered.
 - Hands-on rotations — Organize and pre-package materials to make distribution go smoothly. Rotations should be explained so kids will know just what they are expected to do. Identify areas clearly so kids will know where to go. Volunteers can wear similar shirts or name tags so kids will know who to follow.
 - Social distancing / large groups

- Inclusion — Know the characteristics of different ages to know what typical behavior and abilities are.
 - Adjust plans to accommodate children who need adaptations so that everyone can be involved.
 - If needed, enlist a one-on-one buddy to help children with special needs.
 - Mix younger and older children in groups. Older children can help the younger one's complete tasks. Working with younger children can keep the older ones focused on positive activities.
- Discipline — Explain expectations and guidelines children must follow to avoid discipline issues. Give examples such as: "We show respect for one another when we keep our hands to ourselves and listen when others are speaking."
- Recruitment — Volunteers can be drawn from host families, neighbors, and co-workers; in addition to church family.
- Expanding needs — New volunteers could be drawn in to BKC with the expanding needs for media, social media, sanitizing or health check stations, and other new areas.

5. Question 6: How do we tell everyone about BKC?

- Look at pages 32–35 of the Directors Guide and pages 7–9 in the Host folder for great ideas on spreading the word about BKC!
- Think of some creative and successful ways they have handled publicity for their BKC.
 - S – social media, direct links to registration on church website, QR codes.
 - H – hand out fliers in BKC neighborhood
 - A – apartments and common areas receive fliers/posters
 - R – remind previous VBS attenders with postcards listing BKC locations
 - E – Enlist kids in getting the word out. Kids respond best to other kids.
- Traditional promotion methods such as posters, banners and yard signs can be effective too. Know what is permitted for the location where you will be hosting BKC and follow all community guidelines.

6. Question 7: What is your follow-up plan?

- Look at pages 36–44 in the Directors Guide and Host folder pages 8 and 10–12 for great ideas on registration and follow up.
- Follow up begins with good record keeping during the registration process. Depending on the setting, it can be easy to miss a parent at registration or fail to get complete information. The host may know the family and think they will capture the information later, but if complete information is not gathered, the church will have a difficult time reaching out to the family after BKC.
 - Other creative ways for successful follow up: Phone call from a BKC team member who worked with the child, postcard from a BKC team member who worked with the child, front porch visit from a team member with additional information about the church or delivering a photo from BKC as a keepsake for the child, letter or email from the church, phone call from a children's leader at the church representing the age of the child that attended (Children's Minister, Sunday School teachers, etc.), invitation to an end of summer BKC celebration at the church, invitation to a school or fall kickoff party at the church, a follow-up event during the year in the same location as their BKC. Families are more likely to continue the relationship with the BKC team than they are to visit a church full of strangers.