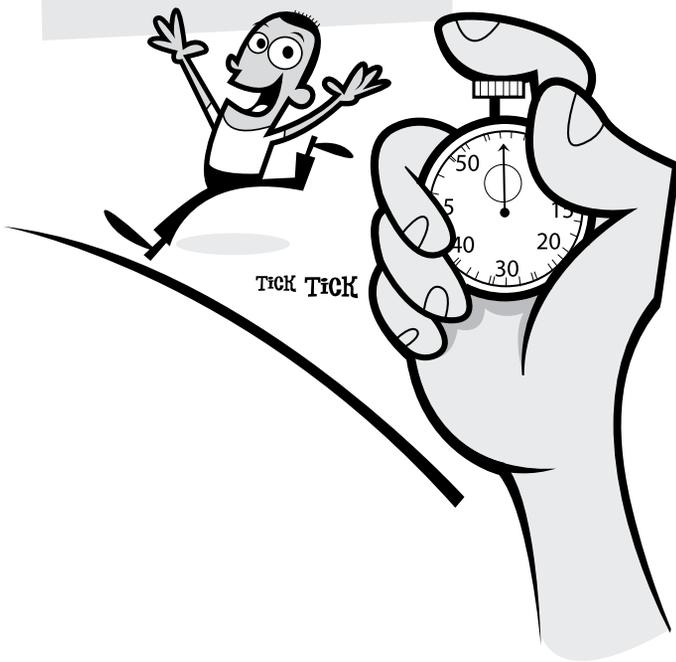


Time Trials

“Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (2 Timothy 1:14).

- Why is the Holy Spirit's help invaluable when things don't go as planned?
- In your ministry role with children, how are you guarding the “deposit” of time God entrusts to you each week?



▼ Training Session

Children's ministry has its own time zone.

Some weeks the time flies by. Other weeks the time drags.

Plus, you're often at the mercy of “big church,” other classes, or any number of outside variables that stretch and squeeze your time. So what can you do?

To be ready for a shortened class time, prepare your lesson with a “first-things-first” approach. Some lessons suggest a certain order of activities. Don't interrupt that flow, but consider where your minutes will be best spent for maximum impact. Decide up front which activities you can cut and which are essential. Then guard the essentials well.

Prepare for those days the sermon goes long or your lesson runs short by preparing an “X-Tension Kit” to pull off the shelf when it's needed. Fill it with review games, simple crafts, favorite music, or other activities adaptable to any lesson focus.

Use extra minutes to reinforce the learning begun earlier. If God entrusts you with additional teaching moments, use them wisely.

Here are a few X-Tension Kit ideas to get you started:

- **Campfire testimonies.** Give each student a thin stick (pencils work in a pinch) and a large marshmallow (or cotton ball). As kids roast their marshmallows over an imaginary fire of small logs (rolled construction paper works well) and red tissue paper, have them share a prayer request, praise, or review a portion of the lesson they liked the most.
- **Hats.** Have a story “re-cap” by letting the kids wear a baseball cap as they take turns sharing a portion of the Bible story.
- **Zip-lock journal.** Give each student a resealable sandwich bag and an index card. Have kids write a short paragraph or draw a picture about the day's Bible lesson and how they'll live out what they learned. Keep the journals handy, and add cards as needed.

The only plan that works is one that allows for change. Be ready to be flexible.



Take this training deeper as you think over these questions:

- What elements of your lesson will you not surrender to a shortened class time?
- How can you be alerted week by week of possible schedule changes that will affect your class time?
- What could you put in an X-Tension Kit to use this week?

▼ Journal

As God stretches us, he promises to strengthen us. Hold a rubber band in your hand and ask God to help you remain flexible when unforeseen changes occur in your class time.

Lord, as you entrust me with moments of time that can impact children for eternity, help me to...

The bottom line: Kids should leave your class knowing Jesus a little better whether they've been there for 15 minutes or 90. Only God can make that happen each week. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you with the ability to make brief moments of time count for eternity.

▼ Application

You feed kids. Every week you serve up a plate of spiritual food to children. How can you give them a balanced diet—even if “mealtime” doesn’t go as planned?

What do you want to make sure your kids are fed this week? Write it on the center of a paper plate. Add to the plate other elements of your lesson. Decide the size of each portion according to what’s vital, what is important but not crucial, and what can be left out if necessary.

After class, evaluate whether your kids went away hungry or well fed, and then plan next week’s menu accordingly.