# RUNNING A SESSION

## BEFORE THE SESSION

The first thing you need to do, before even choosing a lesson, is to find out information about the children who are coming. I ask parents to complete an enrolment form, in addition to the general consent form given out for all the young people in our church. It includes information which will help decide which level of activity is the best fit. Click here for a detailed description of all 4 levels.

The next thing is to look at the resources page to decide which lesson you would like to teach. The lesson plan lists everything you will need. Make sure you have enough copies of the relevant activity sheets, based on the levels of the children attending the session. If possible, provide each child with a named work tray and folder.

I also find it helpful to email the lesson plan and the activities to all the leaders mid-week with a list of who they will be working with.

## SETTING UP

*LAYOUT OF ROOM*   Give yourselves plenty of time to set up! At TBC, two of us arrive an hour before the children are due and set out the room as shown here. The chairs in the centre of the room are for our 'circle' time.

Allocate a place for each child to go to when they first arrive and, as far as possible, keep this as 'their' space.

We have a TV for displaying videos, pictures, etc. I download any videos or pictures on to a USB stick which is then plugged into the TV. I find this more efficient and reliable than using the internet, as any delay or unwanted ads can be very unsettling, and the 'flow' is easily lost! Click here for the free downloading software. If there is no access to a TV and the numbers are small, an iPad or laptop would be adequate provided there is a good wi-fi signal.

*Update July 2020*: We have had a new TV at church since writing this, which has no USB input, so I now save the videos onto a powerpoint – works just as well!

*TIMINGS*   The timings on the lesson plan are given for our church service which starts at 10am. The parents collect the children at 11.15 or soon after.

*WORKTRAYS*   It is helpful to have worktrays for the printed activities and put them ready in their allocated spaces before the children arrive.

*VISUAL TIMETABLE*   Some children find it useful to have a visual 'now/next' timetable as shown here. Click here for an example to print.

*PRAYER*   Always good to allow 10 minutes for the leaders to pray together!

## BEGINNING OF SESSION

As soon as the children arrive, they choose an activity. Usually they bring something - a tablet is the most common, but if we know there is a special interest eg Lego we put it out ready for them.  The end of this section is marked by the 'countdown' video of 100 sheep jumping over a fence. When we get down to '20' all tablets and phones are collected in and the children move to the 'circle' for the teaching time.

## CIRCLE TIME

**WELCOME**   *We play a hello game or sing a song to begin the session.*

*The game is throwing a football to a person in the group and saying their name as we throw.  This encourages the use of names and group identity. We continue passing the ball until everyone has had it at least once. Not easy for everyone but we help each other!*

*The song is very simple. Click here for a recording and here for the chords.*

**PRAYER**   *After the welcome, we pray a set prayer together which you can download here.*

**TEACHING**   *Introduction: I always introduce the video to put it in context. Most of the lesson plans have an outline of the sort of thing I would say, which can be easily adapted to suit the group.*

*Video: our main teaching is from video as the majority of the children who come are on the autistic spectrum so visual learning is more helpful than reading from the Bible. It is also easier to engage all the levels of ability through video. As mentioned above I download You Tube videos in advance which I then play through a TV (via USB or Powerpoint). Unfortunately, due to copyright restrictions I am not allowed to share the saved ones, so I have put links to the online YT versions on the lesson plans.*

*Song: The song will link in with the theme as far as possible. I sometimes use a video, sometimes play the song using a guitar.*

**PRAYER**   *We pray for other things at this point, either connected with the teaching, or something the children would relate to easily. Sometimes they share things that we pray for and I encourage them to pray aloud if they would like to. It's good to keep the language simple and the prayers short!*

**SNACK TIME**   *We have a biscuit and drink of water and use the time to see if anyone has any news to share. This social time is important and has become easier as the children have become more comfortable with each other. When there is a birthday, we always have a cake and give a card. After a few minutes the children move back to their seats for activity time.*

## ACTIVITY TIME

*Time for children to work on the activities in their work trays!*

*In addition to directed tasks it is a good idea to provide a range of games, puzzles, books etc so that individual activities of choice are not started until the official end of this section.*

**FOLDERS**   *Children may like to take their work home. If not, we also provide an A4 ring binder to file their work in, which is then kept at church, with the option to take it home at the end of the year.*



## END OF SESSION

*We allow 15 minutes at the end of the session for children to choose their own activity. Phones, tablets etc are given out. Cars, Lego etc can be played with until parents arrive.*