

Discipline Tips

Are your leaders **glad and relieved** when the weekly club meeting is over? Do they express frustration to you over what has been happening in club? Did some leaders or kids, or both, lose their cool and express anger during the club meeting time? Was the night one long period of whistle blowing, five-counts, three-counts and shouting?

If you answered yes to the above, then your Awana® club has gotten **out of control**. You could try to fix your out-of-control club by exerting a high degree of control, scaring or badgering children until they behave. Forget it. Instead, examine the root causes of your discipline problems and take reasonable steps to address each one.

You may not be aware of some of the factors contributing to your discipline problems. Use the following checklist to identify the root causes of your discipline problems and identify solutions.

- **Problem:** Club starts late every week. Leaders and children straggle in, throwing off the schedule for the whole club night.

Solution: Maintain standards which require leadership to be ready to go 15 minutes prior to the start of club time. See if transportation or other issues make early arrival difficult.

- **Problem:** Children arrive early and are unsupervised. When kids are not supervised, they tend to get wild. This makes it difficult to settle everyone down, resulting in everything taking more time.

Solution: Offer supervised games or activities (such as Bible word search papers) for kids who arrive early.

- **Problem:** The opening ceremony appears sloppy and unorganized.

Solution: Make sure all leaders know what to do during the opening ceremony. Their good example will help kids line up, pay attention and participate properly. Conduct a practice session or walk-through early in the year so everyone knows the opening ceremony routine. An orderly opening ceremony brings the club under control. It also sets the tone for the entire club meeting.

- **Problem:** Children and leaders are negligent in wearing their uniforms.

Solution: Require leaders to wear proper uniforms (with awards) every week. If kids don't understand the importance of the uniform, a central feature of the club program is missing. Always award points to kids who wear their uniforms. You may even award extra points to the team with the most kids in uniform.

- **Problem:** The club meeting is not planned ahead of time. The game director doesn't have the right equipment, the song leader forgets to bring the song sheets and the leaders seem unsure of their duties.

Solution: Conduct a Prayer and Planning Meeting at least once a month. Use these meetings to make sure leaders know what's

happening in club and what are their responsibilities. Encourage each leader to have a training role book and to read it thoroughly. Organization and planning keep kids' behavioral problems to a minimum.

- **Problem:** Transitions between the segments of club are rowdy and take too much time.

Solution: Establish simple rules for moving from Handbook Time to Large Group Time, Large Group Time to Game Time, etc. Don't dismiss children without clear instructions for orderly movement. Keep children organized, in teams and under a leader's direction.

- **Problem:** The same team wins every week. Unbalanced teams contribute to poor motivation of opposing teams. One dream team makes the club experience less exciting for everyone else.

Solution: Spread out the best athletes and handbook achievers among the teams and vary games. Reassign teams if necessary, but use this option sparingly.

- **Problem:** Points are hard to earn. Kids lose heart and give up.

Solution: Establish a point system that gives everyone the opportunity to earn points. Give points for attendance, bringing dues, bringing Bibles and handbooks, wearing uniforms, game competition, passing handbook sections, bringing friends or exemplary behavior during Large Group Time. The athletes can earn points for their team during Game Time. The "brains" can earn points during Handbook Time. And almost all kids can earn points by bringing dues, wearing their uniforms, bringing their Bibles, bringing friends and demonstrating respectful behavior, etc.

- **Problem:** Children constantly lose handbooks, awards and uniforms, costing the club a lot of money to replace them.

Solution: Charge a fair price for replacement items and make parents aware of this policy in advance. This probably won't eliminate the problem, but it will encourage responsibility. Conduct periodic uniform inspections and give points for complete uniforms with awards properly displayed. Awards are less likely to be lost if they're attached to the uniform. Also have a place for kids to store their Bibles, handbooks and other materials during Game Time. Colored baskets, storage containers or reclosable bags are easy to use.

If you address these common causes of discipline problems in Awana, you'll be well on your way to having a well-disciplined club full of kids who are hearing the gospel, learning the Word of God and having fun in the process.