

A Quick Start
GUIDE



BEGINNER SABBATH SCHOOL

A Quick Start Guide for the Beginner Sabbath School

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Introduction

Beginner Sabbath school is the start of an exciting spiritual journey for the children in your class. It's the place where parents can bring their children for their first formal introduction to Jesus and their church family. Through Sabbath school children get to know God, to hear God's Word, and to respond appropriately. Sabbath school provides a religious education that leads children to Jesus and draws them into a relationship with Him.

Beginner Sabbath school is a completely new experience for many first-time parents. Do you know that many young people quit attending church and return when their first child is born? What an opportunity beginner leaders have to reconnect with these parents! You can minister to young families and help them form positive spiritual habits in the home, such as family worship and Sabbath lesson study.

Go to www.childmin.com for leader's resources, training, information about certification classes and a free newsletter, The Children's Leader.

This Quick Start Guide contains ideas to help get your beginner Sabbath school ministry started. As you read, think about how you can adapt these suggestions for your local church. Use this material as a starting point for your own creativity.

SABBAATH SCHOOL DIVISIONS		
Beginner	birth– age 2	2-Year GraceLink Curriculum
Kindergarten	ages 3– 5	2-Year GraceLink Curriculum
Primary	ages 6– 10 (grades 1– 4)	4-Year GraceLink Curriculum
Junior	ages 10-14 (grades 5– 8)	4-Year GraceLink PowerPoints Curriculum
Earliteen (if classes are divided)	ages 13– 14 (grades 7– 8)	2-Year Real-Time Faith Curriculum

Beginner Sabbath School Division Leader Job Description

Your job description may vary as determined by your children's ministries council or your church. The following information is a general guideline for the beginner leader.

Objective: Coordinate and lead the beginner Sabbath school

Time Frame: One or two years, depending on the practice of your local church

Accountable to: Children's ministries coordinator and children's ministries council

Specific Responsibilities:

- Set the goal for your division
- Organize and lead the beginner Sabbath school division
- Equip and coordinate the assistant leaders
- Recruit other needed volunteer staff
- Order your curriculum needs through the church secretary
- Prepare and execute weekly programs
- Plan outreach to parents
- Meet with the children's ministries council or other governing church body
- Encourage volunteers to complete children's ministries certification
- Provide opportunities for volunteer training in your church or at conference events
- Encourage volunteers with thank-you notes, gifts or parties

Beginner leaders must be committed to:

- Jesus Christ and a growing relationship with Him
- Christ-centered ministry to children
- The Seventh-day Adventist Church and its beliefs
- A balanced Christian lifestyle
- Teamwork
- Cooperative ministry under the leadership of the pastor, church board or children's ministries council
- Personal growth and learning

Time Commitment: Approximately 4-6 hours per week, depending on the size of your department

Ongoing Leadership Growth Through:

- Basic children's ministries certification (strongly recommended)
- Advanced children's ministries certification (ongoing)
- Leadership training (ongoing)
- Volunteer management seminar (recommended)

Top 10 Tasks for Beginner Sabbath School Leaders

Read this Quick Start Guide (you are already doing this!)

Get a copy of *Children's Ministries Manual: Ideas and Techniques that Work*. It is full of great ideas and information that will make your ministry successful. This book is available from AdventSource at www.adventsource.org or 800.328.0525.

Look at the Sabbath school lessons your church is using. If you are not using GraceLink (the only curriculum produced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church) find out why that decision was made (for more on GraceLink see page 8).

Call your staff together for an organizational meeting. With their help, determine the goal of your department. What do you want the children to know and do before they move on to the next level? What do you have to do to help them reach the goal? If you do not have a goal, you are shooting arrows without a target.

Get an up-to-date picture of your beginner Sabbath school division – the children’s and departmental needs. Research what has been happening; talk to current and former volunteers. Take an inventory of the supplies already available. Assess what new materials will be needed. Circulate and collect your parent questionnaire (page 5).

Create a budget for the entire year (see page 19 for an example).

Plan a calendar for the year that includes all division activities. Add appropriate church and conference activities (page 20).

Consult with the children’s ministries coordinator concerning expectations, needs, budget, church calendar and areas of concern.

Share your plans, calendar, budget and any other pertinent information with the children’s ministries committee.

Start a program of prayer warriors who are paired with each leader and teacher.

Seven Principles for Excellent Leaders

As the leader of the beginner Sabbath school division you need to commit to setting a high standard. Here are seven principles that will serve you well. Think of them as a guide to a successful ministry.

Personal

In order to share Jesus with others, even small children, you must have a personal connection with Jesus Christ. Personal devotional time, a focus on prayer and openness to the Spirit’s leading are all crucial to being a successful leader.

Excel

Do well what you do. It’s not how much you do, but how well you do it. Show people that you are reliable, accurate and able to anticipate and deal with problems. Eventually they will develop trust, respect and appreciation for what you do. People are more likely to help someone who represents excellence.

Nurture

Be supportive of others. Even self-motivated people are encouraged by a supportive atmosphere. Under such conditions people are more likely to open up and share ideas.

Diversify

Get to know many different kinds of people (with diverse interests, opinions and backgrounds). The more people you know, the more opportunity for networking – sharing ideas, solutions and support. Expand your network to include coworkers, church members, neighbors and employees of companies where you do business.

Be Visible

Participate in groups that share your interests. Do you belong to the Adventist Children's Ministry Association? How about local community groups? Seek out and join other people with similar interests and needs.

Personalize

Learn other people's unique qualities. When you meet people, remember more about them than their name. What are their backgrounds, interests, experiences, personalities? The more you know about a person the easier it is to relate to them.

Organize

Make a networking plan. How can you best make use of these principles? Who can you add to your network list? Start by going through lists of participants in conferences and workshops you've attended.

In your networking efforts, remember that you must be willing to give at least as much as you receive from networking – whether that be through experience and resources or old fashioned elbow-grease. You must put in in order to take out.

Priority #1 - Find Out Who You Are Serving

From the beginning a good leader gets to know the beginner children and their families. On the next page is a survey to adapt and circulate to the families. The information you collect will help you in planning your programs, training, events and calendar. Another way to get to know your children is to visit in their homes. When you visit, be sure to spend quality time with the children and their parents.

Beginner Sabbath School Survey

Please take a few moments to answer the following questions. The results of this survey will be used to assist us in organizing programs and developing resources for you and your children.

1. Child's name _____ Birthday: _____

2. Parent or guardian's name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Prov: _____ ZIP/PC _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

3. Does your child have special needs (allergies, developmental, physical)? YES NO

What are these needs? _____

4. What type of toys interest your child? _____

5. What does your child like to play? _____

6. What type of program, other than Sabbath school, would you like us to organize for you or your child? _____

7. What type of program or class would you be interested in attending? _____

8. Additional comments: _____

Understanding Beginner-Age Children

In order to understand beginner children, ages birth through two years, it is helpful to note the characteristics of their growth and development.

Physical

- Vary greatly in their physical development
- Are growing rapidly
- Tire easily
- Cannot sit still for long

Mental

- Have an attention span of only one or two minutes
- Learn by active involvement and imitation
- Learn best one mini-step at a time
- Focus attention on what they see and/or touch

Emotional

- Are centered in themselves
- Fear separation from parents
- Cry easily
- Express their needs by crying
- Become attached to adults who show love and acceptance of them

Spiritual

- Sense attitudes of respect, joy and anticipation in connection with church, the Bible and Jesus
- Can identify pictures of Jesus
- Will fold hands and kneel (briefly) for prayer

Developmental

- The ability to manipulate objects, events and even people
- Freedom to make choices and interact in learning situations
- Independence to do some things unaided
- Need to feel safe

How Beginner Children Learn

The children in your beginner Sabbath school class learn through exploring and using all of their senses. Here are some ideas that will help you to reach all the children in your class.

Visual: Pictures, DVDs, felts – anything the beginner child can see that will connect them to the lesson.

Auditory: Stories, songs and sounds. Memory verses set to music that can be sung over and over.

Tactile: Touch, build and color. Manipulatives that can be cleaned easily are good.

Movement: Action songs, moving around the room, drama and play. These children learn by experiencing so they will want to be right in the middle of the story!

For more information about learning read *Children's Ministries Manual: Ideas and Techniques That Work*, chapter 6.

Faith Development for Beginners

In Luke 2:52 we read that Jesus grew in wisdom (mental) and stature (physical) and He also grew in favor with God and man. These last two areas suggest both spiritual and social growth.

When we talk about faith development the focus is usually on daily strengthening through prayer, Bible study and all the choices we make. From birth to age two children learn mostly from the important people in their life – parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents and Sabbath school leaders.

Beginner-age children gain faith by experience. Children observe love and faith in their interaction with adults and react to what they experience. They are not consciously thinking about faith but they certainly demonstrate unwavering faith in the people who have demonstrated they are trustworthy.

What does this mean for your beginner Sabbath school class? Since children experience trust, love and acceptance they need a few trusted and loving adults they can connect with. Beginner Sabbath school leaders should be warm, welcoming and have good active listening skills. Hugs for every child are a great way to show unconditional love.

For more about faith development see Chapter 4 of the *Children's Ministries Handbook* available from AdventSource.

Find more information
on reaching
beginners in
*Children's
Ministries
Manual:
Ideas and
Techniques
that Work.*



Available from
AdventSource. Call
800.328.0525 or visit
www.adventsource.org.
Catalog #021992

Beginner Sabbath School Lessons – GraceLink

The beginner Sabbath school is the start of a spiritual journey for the children in your class. To assist the leaders and teachers in Sabbath schools around the world, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists developed an Adventist curriculum called GraceLink.

The GraceLink curriculum is a Bible-based, Christ-centered series of lessons that lead children to grow spiritually and learn Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. In each lesson you will find age-appropriate activities that are fun and bring the Bible to life. Most importantly, these lessons show children how the Bible stories can be applied to their lives.

Much More Online

Find Sabbath school curriculum resources, puzzles, music, PowerPoint presentations, materials list, discussion and more at www.gracelink.net

Last-Minute Planners

We sometimes find ourselves on Friday evening with nothing ready for our Sabbath program. GraceLink has your answer. If you have set up your department in advance with the basic program supplies, all you need to do is grab your teacher's guide and find the parts you can do easily. It's all written out for you – even what to say.

If you can turn yourself into a long-range planner, look ahead to what is needed. Purchase or prepare it at the beginning of the quarter. Then all you need to do is pick it up and go.

If you're not quite that organized yet, ask someone in the church to be your partner. They may not want to get up front but they can have everything ready for you to do. Working two by two is much more fun and efficient.

One important factor for Sabbath school teachers is that these lessons allow for flexibility in the size of your group and also the amount of time that you have. This allows for small and large classes to all use the lessons effectively.

The GraceLink Sabbath school lessons provide total time teaching where every activity focuses on the central message of the Sabbath school lesson for that day. This allows for children to learn the same lesson many different ways (see more on this in **How Children Learn**, p. 6).

The beginner curriculum consists of a two-year cycle. This creates the possibility of some repetition. However, due to developmental and cognitive changes, the lesson will mean something entirely different at age twenty-two months than at two months! Children this age need and enjoy repetition, so instead of studying a new story each week, the beginners will have one story per month.

All of the lessons in the GraceLink curriculum focus on one of the following themes:

- *God loves us and sent His Son to die in our place so we can live forever with Him.*
- *Our response to God's love is that we love Him, too. We show this by worshipping Him.*
- *We love the people around us, too – family, church family and friends.*
- *We serve people who may not know and love Jesus and give them an invitation to be a part of the family of God.*

These four themes are the pillars that will help each child incorporate Seventh-day Adventist beliefs into their lives as they grow in their Christian experience.

Additionally, the planners of GraceLink have followed an overall plan which ensures that all of the major Bible stories are taught (some more than once) as the child moves from one division to the next.

Month	Theme (from www.gracelink.net)	
	Year One	Year Two
January	Creation Week (Genesis 1:1-2:3)	Jesus as a Boy (Luke 2:21-51)
February	Noah (Genesis 6-9)	Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
March	Baby Isaac (Genesis 18:1-16;21:1-8)	The Triumphal Entry (Luke 19:28-44)
April	Breakfast by the Sea (John 21:1-13)	David the Shepherd (I Samuel 16:7,11,12)
May	Jesus in Church (Luke 4:16-30)	Daniel and the Lions (Daniel 6:1-23)
June	Feeding 5000 (Matthew 14:13-21)	Joseph (Genesis 37-46)
July	Young Samuel (I Samuel 3:1-10)	Joash, the Boy King (2 Kings 11, 12)
August	Elijah and Ravens (I Kings 17:1-16)	Naaman's Little Maid (2 Kings 5:1-17)
September	Shunammite's Son (2 Kings 4:8-37)	Baby Moses (Exodus 1, 2)
October	Jairus's Daughter (Mark 5:21-43)	Peter and the Lame Man (Acts 3:1-10)
November	Good Shepherd (Luke 15:4-7)	Paul and the Shipwreck (Acts 27, 28)
December	Baby Jesus (Luke 2:1-20)	Shepherds' View of Christmas (Luke 2)

Why were these Bible stories chosen?

Some leaders want to know why the lessons are not taught in chronological order. This is so children spend more weeks in the year learning about Jesus and His birth, life, death and resurrection than on any other Bible story. As you review the curriculum, you will see that every year during the Christmas and Easter seasons each Sabbath school division studies the birth and then the death and resurrection of Jesus. While many Adventists choose not to make a big deal of celebrating Christmas or Easter, these seasons present a “teachable moment” when much of society is focused on spiritual things. It means that each year, parents and Sabbath school teachers can take advantage of these times to focus children’s attention on what the Bible says about these all-important events.

What about the memory verse?

Remember back when children (and parents) came to Sabbath school and were ready to recite their memory verse and answer questions about the lessons? Now the lesson and memory

You will want to order a teacher’s guide for each adult leader and a student Bible study guide for each child in your Sabbath school class. Don’t forget to order Our Little Friend take-home papers also! Order directly from your Adventist Book Center or ask your church secretary to place an order using the Standing Quarterly Order Form each quarter.

verse are introduced in Sabbath school and then the parents or guardians review the lesson and memory verse with their children every day during the week. Here is why:

- 1) When children were expected to come prepared, teachers expressed concern that often only one or two children in a class would know the Bible story and others not at all. It was difficult to teach so every child was involved. When the lesson is first taught at church, all the children are at the same place. As you teach the lesson, you can encourage kids to study more about it during the week and to share the things they learn with the whole family.
- 2) This model also challenges parents to personal prayer and Bible study as a way to stay close to Jesus and to model this to their children at a very young age. Teachers still ask how many times children studied the lesson and record their responses, not in order to reward them, but to chart their progress. After a while children will begin to study for themselves. Encourage them to increase their study.

If you are not using GraceLink or are considering a change to a different curriculum it would be best to get approval from your children's ministries committee or the church board. This will protect you from potential problems that can come from using materials that do not agree with the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

When using the GraceLink curriculum, keep a few things in mind:

More material is provided than you can use in one Sabbath. Choose what you are most comfortable with and don't try to cram it all in.

When crafts are suggested that don't work for you, change to one that does and still teaches the same lesson.

If music is a problem, substitute other music that fits.

Beginner children are very young – birth to two years of age. Their attention span is very short (one minute per year plus one). Keep every part of the program short, use words they can understand and repeat yourself. Don't try to give them all the details an older child or adult would require. A full hour is too long for most beginner-age children. Consider a shorter program, then permit the children to play while you teach or communicate with the parents.

It's OK to be creative and resourceful, but stay with the main points and the Bible lesson the curriculum is using.

We want to teach children about sharing and mission as soon as possible, but please remember a beginner child only understands what he or she has experienced and that's very little. The context of their world is immediate family, neighbors, Sabbath school, their playground or park. When we tell beginner children they are giving their money to Jesus, they have no concept of what we are talking about. Choose a way to say it that the child can understand, such as, "We give money to help others. Jesus loves for us to help others. Can you help by putting your money in the (box, jar, etc.)?"

Remember that it isn't necessary to cram everything into the early years. You may think the Bible is being watered down, but the beginner child doesn't. It is far better that they learn in little steps. Repetition may be boring to adults but to a small child it provides reinforcement.

A Guide for Evaluating Non-Adventist Resources

We strongly recommend that you use GraceLink, the only Adventist curriculum for beginners, and use other materials to enhance its use. If, for some reason, you decide to use other materials, here are some questions to consider:

- Is the material Bible-based?
- Is it Christ-centered and doctrinally sound?
- Does it reinforce spiritual growth?
- Is it attractive, fun, and does it make the Bible come alive?
- Can it be applied to a child's life today?
- Is it age appropriate?
- Is it well organized yet flexible?
- Does it actively involve children?
- Is it consistent with Adventist beliefs?

Attracting Children to Your Room

Sit down and take a good look at your room. Would you like to be there if you were a child? Is it warm and inviting? Is it interesting? Do you feel safe and comfortable or shy and nervous? Do you feel secure?

It's important to assess these questions. For children to learn, they must be in a safe, comfortable, warm and friendly environment.

Number one on the list – is your room clean and orderly? Even the smallest, darkest room in the lowest level of the church can be made attractive with light colors, cleanliness and organization.

It's important to sanitize the toys and other objects children in your beginner class touch each week. Kids at this age are especially likely to place things in their mouths, so it's important to disinfect those items each week using bleach or another sanitizing agent. After you soak toys in water and disinfectant, it's important to let them air dry rather than using a towel – a towel will soak up and redistribute germs. Also be sure to spray chairs, shelves and vinyl surfaces with disinfectant spray each week. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov to find current guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting.

Next, look at the chairs you expect the children to sit in. Do they fit the size of the children?

Alternatives to chairs that are too large:

- Booster seats
- Carpet squares
- Small carpet or wall-to-wall carpet

What is the height of the illustrations, felt boards and pictures? Sit scrunched down in a child's seat. What do you see without breaking your neck? That's what a child sees, too. How uncomfortable to see nothing but teacher's legs, piano legs, heaters, felt board stand, etc. Lower everything to the child's comfort level – not yours.

Look up at the ceiling at all those beautiful decorations which may include flying birds, snowflakes, eggs and sea creatures. Does this appeal to the beginner or to his or her caregiver? Remember that too much busyness makes children nervous and uncomfortable. They may cry more and withdraw from participating.

Simple Discipline Techniques

If you are new to beginner leadership, be prepared to be flexible from the beginning. Little ones cannot sit still or even on a chair sometimes. They are going to take off their shoes (and maybe more). They are going to cry, balk and generally embarrass their parents or caregivers. This is all part of being a small child.

Sometimes it's the adults who need the discipline – like being quiet so the child can hear, allowing a child not to participate, or allowing a child to hold on to the last handout if it makes them comfortable and secure.

Some things we tend to look at as discipline problems are merely typical of children at this age.

As a leader you need to:

- Stay calm, cool, collected and carry on.
- Encourage sitting by gently, quietly leading them back to their seat as you continue (helpers can do this as well). Sometimes a parent is too frazzled (or too busy talking) to do it. You might say to a parent who is not paying attention to what is going on – very quietly and gently – “I think Jon or Susan needs you right now.”
- Allow children to continue to hold onto whatever they have until they are comfortable giving it up. Offering a new item sometimes helps.

What if you don't have your own Sabbath school room?

Does your class meet in a space that you need to move in and out of each week? Here are a few ideas to make it easier:

- Use plastic boxes that can fit in your vehicle's trunk, if possible. These are for all those handouts and other needed supplies.
- A cardboard display board that folds. Decorate it to fit the season, theme or whatever is appropriated. Keep it in your trunk with the plastic boxes.
- Carpet squares for seats – same storage place.
- A folding tabletop felt board that can also sit on the floor.
- On Sabbath morning, unload storage boxes, display board, felt board and carpet squares and you're ready to go. Use things repeatedly rather than often switching.

- Prepare a short handout of guidelines for parents to help them to know what to do in trying situations. Assure them of their value and your need for them. This might include:
 - Please help your child participate in the program but be flexible with them.
 - If you need to speak to your child, do so as quietly as possible. For the benefit of all our children, please save your visiting time until the end of the program.
 - If your child loses control, please walk them outside until they feel better.
 - Physical and verbal attacks are always inappropriate and should never be used as discipline.

Children can be aggressive even at this early age. If you have an aggressive child in your classroom, try the following ways to stop the behavior:

- Act immediately by removing them from the situation as you tell them, “No, we don’t _____. It _____.”
- Distract the child with something else.
- Empathize with the child’s feelings. Verbally express such things as, “You’re angry, sad, etc.”
- Have helpers keep an eye out for potential situations and deal with them before they escalate.

There are many good books available on discipline. Consult your local Adventist Book Center.

Ministering to Parents

Do you know that many young people quit attending church and return when their first child is born? What an opportunity beginner leaders have to reconnect with these parents! They may only come to Sabbath school and leave right afterward, so while they are there offer them something to think about. Offer them companionship, love and acceptance.

Their need is not to be reminded of what they have done or what they should do. Their need is to get through one more week with their schedules, finances and family relationships. They know the facts and they need real help. Don’t dwell on the doctrines. Instead, consider how Jesus related to people and met their needs.

These new parents need to know they don’t have to do it alone. They don’t need to show their worth by the car they drive, their outward beauty or the house they live in. They need to know Jesus.

Parenting Newsletter

In each issue of **ADVENTIST PARENTING** you will find addressed issues of family faith and practical advice by age category to help you raise confident, God-centered kids. **ADVENTIST PARENTING** also points you to resources to help answer your questions about topics such as instilling values like honesty and kindness, building your child’s self-esteem, developing your child’s relationship with Jesus, and discipline, as well as uniquely Adventist topics such as making Sabbath fun for you and your child. Sign up at www.adventistparenting.org

Instead of spending your entire hour on Sabbath morning with the children's program, include parent time while the children play. Here are some subjects worth thinking about:

- Help a parent know how to find a few minutes a day to minister to their child spiritually.
- Encourage them to share with one another and the group and brainstorm how to help in specific situations.
- Share a short, encouraging book or article.
- Do a study on Jesus and how He met people's needs.
- Ask them their needs. Plan a class that they would be interested in attending during the week.
- Let them work out the time and place.
- Help them with parenting problems and skills.

Most importantly, be sure Sabbath school interests the parents and meets their needs. Make sure it encourages them to get through another week and helps them to learn how to rely on Jesus.

Volunteers – The Key to Success

Recruiting Volunteers

The parents in your room may be your best source of volunteers. They will be coming to your Sabbath school every week with their child and will have an interest in the programs and activities that their child is involved in. Here are some ideas for recruiting:

- Approach the potential volunteer in an appropriate place at an appropriated time.
 - Never between church services
 - Ask when and where it would be convenient to meet
 - If you choose calling, ask when would be a good time
- Approach prospective volunteers in a kind, positive manner.
- Volunteers for beginner-age Sabbath school need to be able to get up and down from the floor so they can interact eye to eye with the children.
- Provide a printed job description.
- Explain the benefits of volunteering in the beginner department.
- Pray with the person. They need to feel God has called them and He will bless in the work they do.
- Allow them total freedom in the decision to join your team.

Join the Adventist Children's
Ministries Association for
networking, ideas and a
members-only newsletter.

www.acma-online.org



Who Do You Recruit?

- Find members who have children's work at heart. Ask them to pray for your department.
- Select people who have had experience working with children. Ask them to pray for your search and then with a specific volunteer.
- Encourage current workers to recruit helpers who love working with children. Groom them as future volunteers.
- Inspire adult Sabbath school classes to adopt or sponsor "missionaries" to the children's division.
- Be creative in your search. Don't forget youth and seniors.
- Ask the nominating committee to consult the children's division leader before appointing leaders in the department.

Retaining Volunteers

Retaining volunteers doesn't happen by accident. You must plan carefully. Show workers that you care about their efforts.

- Ask how things are going and what needs they have.
- Hold a dedication service that includes both volunteers and their prayer partners.
- Find substitute teachers who will work in an emergency so volunteers won't have to worry if they need to be absent.
- Visit volunteers at home so they know you really care. Do a kind deed.
- Put up a bulletin board in the hall and display pictures of volunteers.

In-service education also helps hold volunteers. People like to feel that they're growing. Here are a few suggestions:

- Volunteers expect that meetings will benefit them, and want to be involved in the planning.
- Be respectful of their time by beginning on time, ending on time and keeping it relevant.
- Use humor, energy, creative touches and involvement.

12 Tips for Keeping Volunteers

- Start them slow – immerse them in your vision
- Be a model – be real and transparent
- Build trust – believe in them
- Invest your time in them – be a coach – encourage them
- Ask for commitment – check on them systematically
- Set goals for growth
- Supply the tools they need – conduct regular equipping meetings
- Communicate on a regular basis
- Care enough to confront
- Ask for ideas and opinions when appropriate
- Thank them
- Give them someone to work with

Adapted from "Volunteers that Stick" by Jim Wideman, *Ministry Today*, Jan./Feb. 2008

- Begin programs with ice-breaker techniques to relax those who attend.
- Make it spiritual in nature as well as educational.
- Present methods that will improve skills.
- Teach them how to meet the needs of children.
- Retain the church's shared vision as the center of child training.

Recruiting and holding volunteers in the children's division is an all-year effort. Build a program that makes your volunteers proud and they'll tell others. Then when recruiting time comes, those who have worked want to stay, and others will count it a privilege to join.

Guidelines for Volunteers and Caregivers

Because our society is filled with pain, problems and litigation caused by improper conduct of adults working with children and youth, it is imperative that those working with children at church have meaningful guidelines for conduct – to protect both themselves and those under their care. As a ministry volunteer, you want parents and others to feel comfortable and confident with you. Photocopy the following page for each helper in your division. Make it into a poster to display in your classroom.

Be aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse; be aware of the legal requirements in your locality for reporting child abuse. In nearly all places, a caregiver can be held legally responsible for failing to report suspected or actual child abuse. Working with children and youth at church is not only a privilege; it is also a deep responsibility that must be handled with utmost care. If you suspect a problem, consult with the children's ministries coordinator before moving forward.

An Important Message for Adults in Beginner Sabbath School

Never leave children you are responsible for unattended. Provide adequate supervision at all times, no matter what.

Never be the only adult serving as a caregiver. Always have at least one other person present.

Always ask a child's permission before touching him or her anywhere, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is especially true for any area that would normally be covered by a t-shirt and shorts. If an injury is within this area, make sure another adult works with you as you provide care.

Kids need to be touched appropriately. However, keep hugs brief and shoulder-to-shoulder or side-to-side. Always keep your hands at (not below) the shoulder level. A caregiver kiss is to the forehead or cheek only. For small children who like to sit on laps, encourage them to sit or stand next to you with your arm around them in an appropriate manner.

When taking small children to the bathroom take another adult along or leave the door open.

If the door to the classroom does not have glass in or around it, the door should be left open so the teacher is in full view.

Sample Budget

Here is a sample form for computing a budget. It can be adapted easily to fit your needs. Always check what is already in the department before adding new items to the list. Also consider what can be donated or borrowed. Search the internet and stores for freebies. Keep your supplies organized so they can be used repeatedly. Try to build up the basic supplies recommended in the GraceLink teacher's guide.

Resource Needs for the Beginners Department:

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Adventist Book Center Materials | |
| GraceLink teacher's guides | _____ |
| GraceLink student quarterlies | _____ |
| Our Little Friend take-home papers | _____ |
| Kid's Ministry Ideas magazine subscription | _____ |
| 2. Supplies to be purchased | |
| Craft/art supplies | _____ |
| Paper products | _____ |
| Program supplies recommended
in the teacher's guide | _____ |
| 3. Equipment or major additions needed | _____ |
| 4. Outreach activities | _____ |
| 5. Additional nurture activities | _____ |
| 6. Printing and photocopying | _____ |
| 7. Other | _____ |
| | TOTAL _____ |

Permission to adapt and copy for local church use.

Planning Your Budget

The budget is your ministry vision expressed in money. A budget is, at best, an estimate as to the amount of money you think you will need to spend during a specific time. It is better to estimate too high than too low.

Steps to Creating Your Budget

1. Consider the needs.

Look at departments' goals

Inventory what you already have

Determine your additional needs

Consult your GraceLink teacher's guide supply list for help

Prioritize your immediate and long-range needs

Identify your categories of needs:

- Curriculum
- Books and other resources
- Printing and photocopying
- Supplies and other materials
- Equipment

3. Discuss the budget with the children's ministries coordinator and committee.

4. If you need to reduce your budget, ask yourself these questions:

Can we accomplish the same goal less expensively?

Is this purchase vital to our ministry vision?

Is the timing right for this purchase or expense?

Have we done all we can to justify this expense?

Are you willing to bend on this purchase?

How might we raise additional money to accomplish our vision?

5. Evaluate and adjust your budget on a regular basis.

Building a Calendar

Communication is important to the success of your beginner department. Keeping everyone informed helps avoid conflict between other church programs, leaders and parents. A monthly calendar keeps everyone informed of what is going to happen, when and where.

When planning your calendar, consider other events in your church or conference that may impact your division. Include these in your finished calendar. Consider the possibilities listed on the calendar below.

January Craft day	February TV Turnoff Week	March Worldwide Day of Prayer for Children at Risk
April Training seminars – in-house and conference sponsored	May Children’s church	June Camp meeting
July Family nature camp/retreat	August Children’s prayer group	September Community projects Church evangelistic meetings
October Children’s Sabbath	November Parenting seminar	December Holiday programs

Add your division events to the calendar. You may also want to include the lesson theme or memory verse for each week along with techniques for parents to help their children assimilate the lesson into their lives.

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Get Started!

We hope this Quick Start Guide has provided you with a good starting point for your beginner Sabbath school class. You are part of the Master's plan! Remember that God has a plan for you and each of the beginners that will be touched by your ministry.

Recommended Resources

Children's Ministries Manual: Ideas and Techniques that Work (also available in Spanish and French). Quantity discounts are available (*catalog #021992*). For a complete listing of children's ministries resources visit *AdventSource* at www.adventsource.org. You can place your order or request a catalog by calling 800.328.0525.

The Adventist Book Center offers magazines, **GraceLink materials**, books and much more. Visit www.adventistbookcenter.com or call 800.765.6955 to reach the ABC that is closest to you.

Join the **Adventist Children's Ministry Association** and receive benefits such as a newsletter, special deals on Children's Sabbath school materials and online training. A lifetime membership only costs US\$50. To sign up go to www.acma-online.org.

Find Sabbath school programs online, answers to your questions, podcasts and everything you need to know about the GraceLink curriculum at **www.GraceLink.net**.

Sign up for the free quarterly **Children's Leader** newsletter at www.childmin.com. You'll also find a lot of great ideas on this site.

Kid's Ministry Ideas, a quarterly magazine with lots of ideas for children's Sabbath school, is available as a standing order from the Adventist Book Center or from Review and Herald at www.reviewandherald.com.

Visit the General Conference Children's Ministries website at www.childrensministries.gc.adventist.org. Its goal is to serve those who work with children by providing ideas, resources and information. There is also a section called "**Just for Kids**" with devotionals, activities and craft ideas for children.

To see events and programs that help **children with special needs** visit www.NathanielsHope.org.

The **National Children's Ministries Agency** exists to serve the local church, its pastors and laity in their pursuit of excellent ministry to the children of their church and their communities. Visit www.4kids.ag.org.

www.kidology.org aims to equip and encourage those who minister to children by providing practical training, creative teaching resources and personal consultation.

Beginner Sabbath School

This Quick Start Guide for Beginner Sabbath School is full of important information to help you start or revitalize a ministry at your local church. This guide contains a job description, instructions for getting started, tips for maintaining a successful ministry, troubleshooting suggestions, recommended resources, and more. Whether you're new to this ministry or a seasoned volunteer, this Quick Start Guide will inspire you with lots of great ideas you can immediately put to use in your local church.

Other Children's Ministry titles in the Quick Start Guide Series

- Children's Ministries Coordinator
- Kindergarten Sabbath School
- Primary Sabbath School
- Junior Sabbath School
- Earliteen Sabbath School
- Family Ministries

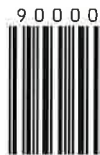
For a complete listing of Quick Start Guide titles visit www.adventsource.org



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