



Running Youth Group Games & Activities

Games and activities are a valuable part of youth group ministry. Leaders must always assess the activities they conduct, as well as where they run them, to make sure that they are safe. This can depend upon who the leaders are and the type of activity taking place, as well as the ages of the participants. When running an activity of any kind there is always the potential for an accident or incident to occur.

An accident or incident is where someone is injured on church property or during an event that the church is running. Accidents are those things that are unexpected. Incidents are an intentional act that harms someone, such as bullying or fighting.

If leaders are prepared and know what to do in the event of an accident or incident, then it is possible that the harm caused can be reduced. By implementing good boundaries, leaders can ensure that the youth group environment is safe for everyone and that opportunities for abuse are minimised.

Consider:

- The need for a leader with a first aid certificate or similar qualifications
- A well-stocked first aid kit
- Access to a phone
- Access to information about parents / carers

BE RESPONSIBLE

All games and activities should be supervised well, taking into consideration the age, number, ability, and gender mix of the youth, as well as the venue, time, duration, and nature of the games. Leaders are responsible for the wellbeing of the young people entrusted to them throughout the whole time they are together. Rules and boundaries should always be explained clearly before a game commences. Risk of injury must be taken seriously, and games should be organised in a way that minimises the risk of harm to the youth and leaders. For example, in a game where the youth play in opposing teams, it is important that they are physically matched in size and strength to reduce the risk of injury.



BE MINDFUL OF TOUCH

It is also important to consider how physical touch is used in a game. Youth games often involve holding hands, linking arms, or tipping. Leaders should be aware of how their touch is perceived by the youth depending on age, gender, and cultural background. It is best to pair the youth with one another rather than with leaders when possible. Leaders should discern which games should restrict males and females from being in a pair or team (e.g. games with heavy physical contact).

If leaders notice accidental inappropriate touch between youth kids, the situation should be monitored to ensure no one is distressed and that the contact does not persist.

If a leader accidentally touches a young person in this way, they should apologise as soon as it occurs and make sure the young person is not upset or uncomfortable. The leader must be transparent rather than pretending it did not happen. If the incident was not observed by the other leaders, they should inform the leader in charge or let an elder know that it happened.

BE DRESSED FOR THE OCCASION

Clothing and footwear should be taken into consideration when planning games. For example, if many of the girls come to youth in school dresses, the leaders may suggest they bring a change of clothes if the games are going to active, or plan games around this factor. In the same way, all youth group leaders should dress sensibly, wearing clothing that is not revealing, distracting or inappropriate.

Youth group members should be told in advance if there will be messy games or activities where they will get wet. This gives them the chance to plan what they will wear.

BE RESPECTFUL

Games should not convey unloving or insensitive messages. If any ideas relating to ethnicity, gender, disability, or disadvantage are involved in an activity, leaders should thoughtfully assess whether that message is in line with the purpose of youth group. For example, games such as “Chinese Whispers”, “Cowboys and Indians” and “Battle of the Sexes” can perpetuate underlying messages that are unloving. Often simply changing the name of a game will be enough to ensure no one feels disrespected.



BE TOGETHER

Games that involve hiding or spreading out around a venue create many more opportunities for things to go wrong. Adequate supervision must be maintained in all games, and no leader should be left alone with a young person out of view. Therefore, it may not be possible for games such as “Hide and Seek” and “Sardines” to be played. Youth group should be a time of fellowship. Games should always foster this sense of community and not be divisive or exclusive.

BE LOVING

Some kids do not enjoy certain games or might not be able to participate in a game. Try to make the activities inclusive to all the youth group members, not just the sporty or outgoing ones. If someone is sitting out, make sure they are not isolated or lonely and think about what could be done to involve them in future.

BE SUPPORTED

Youth groups are under the oversight of the Session, who are responsible for providing youth group leaders with appropriate training, supervision, and support in the activities they run. When unsure about running an activity, youth group leaders should consult the Session for guidance.

For more information, please contact Jon Flood at the Conduct Protocol Unit on 02 9690 9325 or jflood@pcnsw.org.au

NOTE: This information does not form part of the policy or process for dealing with or preventing abuse within the church but is provided as general information.