



Check Your Flight Plan

Planning your VBS may feel like a big task. But never fear! From budgeting to decorating to a countdown calendar, this section provides the information you'll need to make informed decisions and easily navigate your way through *Operation Space*.

Choose a Format

Five day? Three day? Morning? Evening? At home? At church? There are a variety of options to consider when planning your VBS. Choose from the options listed below, or devise your own! *Operation Space* is designed for a three-hour, five-day experience, but it can be easily adapted to a variety of situations.

- **Five-Day Morning VBS:** VBS runs Monday through Friday in the morning. One advantage to this format is its outreach appeal. Many parents are looking for fun summertime options for their children during the day.
- **Five-Day Evening VBS:** VBS runs either Monday through Friday in the evening, or Sunday through Thursday in the evening, with the closing program following on Friday evening. One advantage to this plan is that church members who work during the day are able to help during the evening.
- **Three-Day VBS:** VBS runs morning and evening for two days, with the fifth session on either the morning or evening of the third day. This option may be advantageous if you are renting a facility or if your church is available for limited days.
- **Backyard Bible Club:** VBS is held in a home. Anyone in the church who has a heart to reach his neighborhood can host VBS from his home. An advantage of this option is its small and personal nature.
- **Christian School or Homeschool Co-op:** VBS is held in a Christian school or homeschool setting during the school year. This is appropriate if your church does not host a summer VBS program.
- **Christian Camp:** VBS runs one or more weeks throughout the summer at a Christian camp. This VBS adapts well to a camp setting.
- **VBS on the Road:** Take VBS on the road. Use it on a youth mission trip, with an inner city ministry or in a neighborhood park. This can multiply your effectiveness, using your VBS program not only for your own church but also for another church or ministry as well.

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A Day at Operation Space

The *Operation Space* day is divided into rotations, with 5-minute breaks between each rotation that allow for Cadet Crews to get to the next location. Rather than staying in one room for the whole day, children are on the move, rotating from site to site with their Cadet Crews.

The site rotation plan enables VBS crew members to specialize in just one area rather than requiring them to be responsible for multiple areas. People may be more willing to help if they know their responsibility is limited to just crafts, teaching, or games. This also allows your volunteers to specialize in an area they are gifted in.

Children enjoy the site rotation plan, as well, because they are constantly on the move, hearing and experiencing different sights, sounds, and people. The rotation schedule for each group is the same each day.

Operation Space is designed to take between 2½ and 3 hours each day to allow adequate time to complete each rotation. The three-hour plan is recommended because of the content-rich program. Decide which schedule works best for you (see p. 28 for sample schedules), and plan to venture through the day in the following order.

- **Launch Site Opening Assembly:** Everyone gathers in a large assembly area to start the day. The opening assembly consists of singing, a Space Probe lesson, Missions Moment, announcements, and prayer. See the *Assembly Guide* (item 10-7-006) for more information. You'll need one guidebook for each assembly leader.

- **Rotation Stations:** Cadet Crews travel to four different rotation stations.

- › **Bible Briefing:** At this site, children meet flight instructors who present the day's Bible lesson and apologetics content in appealing ways. See the age-appropriate teaching guides for more information. You'll need one age-appropriate Teacher Resource Pack for each flight instructor.

- › **Cosmic Crafts:** At this station, children create fun crafts that are theme related and reinforce the day's Bible content. See the *Cosmic Craft Guide* (item 10-7-007) for more information. You'll need one guidebook for each craft leader.

- › **Galactic Games and Stellar Snacks:** At these stations, children spend half the time playing games and the other half eating snacks. Games and snacks are theme related and reinforce the day's Bible content. See the *Galactic Game Guide* (item 10-7-009) and the *Stellar Snack Guide* (item 1-07-008) for more information. You'll need one guidebook for each game and snack leader.

- **Launch Site Closing Assembly:** The children gather again in the large assembly area for a closing drama, singing, contest announcements, and dismissal. See the *Assembly Guide* for detailed information.

Map Out Your Space

Your church may be small, large, or somewhere in between. You may be landlocked or have outdoor space. Take some time to think through your particular space configuration, and plan where each rotation station will work best so you can design your specific schedules.

The following suggestions are based on a VBS with fewer than 100 children. For each additional 100 children, you'll want to add an extra set of stations.

- **Opening and Closing Assemblies:** All children are together at this time, so you'll need a large room that can accommodate everybody, such as your sanctuary or fellowship hall. This area should also feature the following:
 - › Sound system (including microphone and place to play *Turbo Tunes* music CD and DVD)
 - › Screen
 - › Projector
 - › Stage (on which to conduct the daily drama)
- **Galactic Games and Stellar Snacks:** We suggest hosting snacks and games during the same rotation time, so place these stations in close proximity to each other. Crews can split their time between the two, rotating halfway through, or all crews can play games first, followed by the snacks.

It's great to have a place outside to play and eat, but also consider your gym, or an open area close to a kitchen. For snacks, children can either sit on the ground or in an area with tables and chairs.

Both of these areas together will need to accommodate one group of kids at a time (see p. 26 for how to assign Cadet Crews to groups). Or you may choose to host a game/snack area for each age in a group (e.g., one for age 4, one for age 7, one for age 10 in Group 1), in which case you would need three game/snack areas per rotation.
- **Cosmic Crafts:** Choose a large room with space for tables for kids to stand around. Place a few

chairs around the edges of the room for those who might need to sit down. Make sure it's an area that can be easily cleaned.

This area should be able to accommodate one group of kids at a time. Or you may choose to host a craft area for each age in a group, in which case you would need three craft areas per rotation. Your area might also include the following:

- › Screen/projector (to project directions)
- › Sound system (to play *Turbo Tunes* music CD)
- **Bible Briefing:** Since we suggest allowing at most two Cadet Crews in each Bible Briefing room, you will need to determine the number of rooms based on the number of crews in each group.

Classrooms work well for this station. Assign larger classrooms to the crews that have the most children, especially if these are older children.

(Note: If your Cadet Crews are of combined ages, rather than separated by ages or grades, we suggest using the Primary teaching material for all crews.)

Pre-Primaries spend half of their time engrossed in learning centers (Space Stations) and the other half in teacher-directed time. The learning centers can be in one part of the room and the teacher-directed time in the other part, or these can be divided into two rooms that are next to each other. If learning centers are not possible in your setting, suggestions are given in the *Pre-Primary Guide* to easily adapt to all teacher-directed lesson time.

- **Toddlers** spend most of their time in one area (they join the rest of the VBS for the opening and closing assemblies), so plan enough rooms for the number of Toddlers you have registered.
- If you choose to divide the rotation stations by age group, place all stations for each age group relatively close to each other to cut down on travel time. For example, when planning the Junior locations, locate the game, snack, craft, and teaching areas as close as possible.

Cadet Crews

Are you having nightmares about groups of little children wandering around, getting lost in space? Cadet Crews provide a way to easily move your children from station to station. The following information will help you organize your crews.

1. Prayerfully consider how many children you expect at VBS. Determine how many were at last year's VBS, then, with faith, plan on an increase. "And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'" (Luke 17:5).
2. Based on your projected numbers, decide approximately how many Cadet Crews you need. It is suggested to assign no more than 15 children to each crew. Assign each crew a space name, based on the list on p. 12.
3. We recommend organizing your Cadet Crews according to age or grade levels.
4. Assign each crew to Group One, Group Two, or Group Three. See the Sample Cadet Crew Placement on p. 30.
5. You'll need at least two workers per crew, so recruit accordingly. With younger age groups, more helpers are needed.
6. Print multiple copies of the Cadet Crew Roster on the Director's Resource CD, and assign registered children to Cadet Crews.
7. The site rotation plan works with any number of Cadet Crews, but it is most efficient if the number of crews is a multiple of three. This keeps all site leaders active every rotation.
8. If you anticipate fewer than 30 children, make two crews: Pre-Primary Cadets (6 and younger) and Primary/Junior Cadets (ages 7–12).
9. Assign each Cadet Crew to a specific room for each rotation (craft, snack/game, Bible Briefing). See p. 30 for a sample. You can group multiple Cadet Crews into one snack/game or craft site, assuming the space is big enough and the help adequate. However, it is best to limit each Bible Briefing station to one or two teams—preferably one. This allows more personal interaction.
10. Explain the rotation system to the VBS crew at the Crew Workshop (see p. 55). Make brightly col-

ored copies of your personalized Schedule, Cadet Crew Placement, and Cadet Crew Room Schedule for each VBS crew member. Blank forms are available on the Director's Resource CD.

11. Walk the crew leaders through the rotations before VBS. It's better to get lost by yourself than with 15 kids trailing behind you! Make sure room signs are easy to see.

Assembling Crew Supplies

To help keep crew leaders organized, assemble two containers—one *Operation Space* bag (item 10-7-092) and one laundry basket or 4.5 gallon storage bin—for each crew leader. The *Operation Space* bag will hold the crew's daily supplies (listed below).

The other bin can be used as a drop-off location for each crew leader. It should remain in the same spot all week long. Use this bin to deposit fliers, daily memos, or new supplies. The crew leader can store the children's take-home items in this bin, as well.

Invite some administrative friends to a container-stuffing party a few days before VBS. At this gathering, you will prepare the bag and container for each crew leader. Crew leaders should pick up the bag the day before VBS begins. Listed below is a suggested plan for preparing the containers.

- Make the needed copies ahead of time and prepare supplies so your work crew can focus on counting, sorting, and stuffing.
- Print Cadet Crew names on cardstock, two copies for each name. Using clear packing tape, attach one copy to the bag and one to the lid of a 4.5 gallon storage bin or the side of a laundry basket.

In each bag, include:

- Name tags (include a few extra for walk-ins)
- 1–2 permanent black markers to write names on name tags
- 1–2 pens for general use
- Sharpened pencils or markers, 1 per child
- Crayons

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- Coloring and activity sheets (Director's Resource CD)
- 5 adhesive bandages in a zippered baggy
- 10 ft. or 15 ft. lengths of rope to be used by preschoolers as they walk from area to area
- Lunch bags, which will be used to send home daily papers. Additional bags will need to be distributed each day to the crew leaders.
- Crew Leader Responsibilities (Director's Resource CD)
- Daily Schedule (Director's Resource CD)
- Cadet Crew Placement (Director's Resource CD)
- Cadet Crew Room Schedule (Director's Resource CD)
- Registration Forms, 5–10 per bin (Director's Resource CD)
- Memory Verse Reference Sheets, 1 per child (Director's Resource CD)
- Caretaker Handbooks, 1 per child (see Director's Resource CD for sample)
- Decision Cards (Director's Resource CD)
- Memory Verse/Attendance Chart, 1 per child (Director's Resource CD)
- Cadet Crew Roster (Director's Resource CD) with preregistered children listed for each crew, 1 copy for each day of VBS
- Map of church, with VBS areas clearly marked
- Visitor Appreciation Certificates (item 10-7-054)
- Memo from the director with whatever last minute information you want to convey