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24 basic small group do's & don'ts

how

WE USED THIS RESOURCE

We found it challenging to train first time small group leaders. Too little information, and they felt under prepared. Too much information left them feeling overwhelmed. Neither was good!

At the end of our training, we would conclude with a simple list do's and don'ts. The idea wasn't for them to remember all of them, 24 is way too many!

Instead, this tool was something a leader could look at regularly to find one idea they could apply to enhance their ministry

1. **Do show up early.**Your small group only meets once a week; make the most of that time by not cutting into it by being late.
2. **Don't show up unprepared.**Position yourself to make a big impact by knowing where you want to lead your students.
3. **Do show up regularly.**Students need stability, and great relationships are built through time. In a world where superficial relationships abound, being present for your students will speak volumes.
4. **Don't forget about your host home.**Spend a little time before or after your small group connecting with the parents of your host home. A little relationship goes a long way.
5. **Do start on time.**If you wait for everyone to get there...you'll start a little later each week and the cycle will never end.
6. **Don't lead without knowing where you want to take the students.**All conversations are organic and can have a life of their own. However, you ought to know your teaching objective(s) and keep it (them) in mind.
7. **Do ask great questions.**After setting up the discussion, put the ball in their court by asking questions.
8. **Don't ask bad questions.**Bad questions have yes or no answers. The goal is conversation, not conveying information. If you must ask a yes or no question, make sure it's quickly followed with "Why?"
9. **Do let students talk.**Value your students by letting them contribute.



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10. **Don't be afraid of silence.**Awkward silence is the only thing that will get some students talking; it's OK to let courage build up until a student is comfortable to talk.

11. **Do give students time to think.**If a response is too quick (for example, because it's a "church answer"), encourage a student to pause by saying, "Great. Take a second to consider, would you add anything else?"

12. **Don't let the conversation go too long without encouragement.**Say thanks and give praise to your students for contributing.

13. **Do be delicate when correcting.**Your students will say something that's way off track...that's OK! Think of all the stupid things you've ever said... You can begin with, "on the surface, that seems right..." or "I used to think that too..." (if you did!). There's no one size fits all, but be gentle, or no one will want to risk and share again.

14. **Don't feel like you have to finish, complete, or correct a student's answer.**Everything said in your small group doesn't have to be "right" or "fixed."

15. **Do be honest if you don't know an answer.**No one knows everything; it's OK if you can't answer a question. Be gracious, admit your ignorance, and look for answers for your next meeting. Not knowing an answer can encourage your students a ton.

16. **Don't read questions off the leader's guide.**If you are prepared, you'll only need to glance at your notes.

17. **Do put the questions into your own language.**Be natural and communicate the same questions in your own words.

18. **Don't be too scripted.**Preparation is great, but so is flexibility! Making changes on the fly is OK, even necessary at times. Knowing where you want your students to end (your objectives) is key. Keep your group focused while remaining flexible.

19. **Do let your students talk more than you.**Don't give long sermons; let them talk!

20. **Don't settle for easy answers.**If you feel like a student has more to offer, encourage them to go further and deeper.

21. **Do ask students if they have questions.**Great conversations can happen when you let the students ask questions. Encourage them to deal with the material on their own terms. Create a climate where people feel the freedom to ask any question.

22. **Don't move to a new question too quickly.**Encourage multiple students to answer a single question. After one student answers a question, ask, "Would anyone like to add to that?" or "Does everyone agree/disagree with that?"

23. **Do require and maintain confidentiality.**This allows students to open up because they feel their environment is safe. However, don't keep potentially dangerous information to yourself (e.g. abuse, suicide, destructive intentions, etc.).

24. **Don't be discouraged.**When (not IF) you have a bad night. There is not a small group leader alive in the world that hasn't had bad nights.