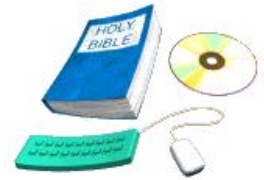


Teaching with Software

A brief introduction for our volunteers

Thank you for teaching the children! Your guiding presence and love for God's Word is an important part of their faith journey. Our teaching methods include computers because they are exciting to this generation. They command the kids' attention, present important content in a memorable way, ...and give them a desire to come back for more.



The attraction also creates a challenge for you the teacher. Unlike some other teaching methods, the kids will be eager to get into the software and want to quickly push through it to see all there is to see. And unlike some other learning activities, the kids' attention will be focused on the screen, and not the teacher. This is why you will need to create some extra structure and expectations in your software lesson. And you will need to become the "guide by the side" when using the software.

Structure and Expectations

When your students first come in, have them come to the discussion table rather than sit at the computers. Have the computers turned on, but turn the monitors *off* because even a screen saver can be a distraction to the students. They will immediately want to know "what program" they are using today, so write it down on the board. Over time, these habits and expectations will improve their experience and yours.

Guide by the Side

Rather than standing back and watching, we want you to sit down at the computers with your students as much as you are able, --and go through the software *with them*.



This will accomplish a couple of things:

1. Your presence will settle them down and let each child know their needs will be met (such as "getting their turn" at the keyboard).
2. You can help pace them through the software, rather than letting them rush through.
3. You can point things out, make comments along the way, and stop for discussion. (Without you, kids will naturally try to bypass some content.) You'll also be able to hear and respond to their comments as well.
4. A guide by the side can help younger children navigate and read onscreen texts. This will allow you to extend many of your software choices 'down' to the younger grades.
5. Your proximity to the volume button will help keep each computer's sound from spraying over onto other computers.

Depending on how many computers and students you have, you may need extra volunteers to help you. Most teachers have found that they can cover 2 to 3 kids per computer at 2 computers. In order to bring additional volunteers quickly up to speed, make sure you do a thorough introduction at the beginning of the lesson, highlighting key concepts, key questions to wrestle with, and key parts of the program to spend time on.

Many teachers also create a worksheet for students (and teachers) to follow at each computer. The worksheet usually includes instructions and questions to answer, -holding students accountable for paying attention, and giving them something to share back at the discussion table. Some programs have ready-made worksheets available at www.sundaysoftware.com/tips.

How Software Fits in a Lesson Plan

Your software is a component in a lesson plan, not a replacement for one. You'll still be welcoming and fellowshiping with your students, engaging in face-to-face Bible study and discussion, including other types of learning activities, and reflecting and praying with them.

Some programs were designed like a mini-lesson. They introduce the Bible story, have background notes, pose questions, include games and quizzes, and some even have reflection activities. These programs require more time at the computer, and you can often pick and choose what you want to use out of the software. Some lesson-style programs play like challenging games.



Other programs have activities in them that fit into a specific part of your overall lesson. Such programs may only offer a short story presentation --which would be used as part of your Bible study with your students. Or they may offer a puzzle or quiz activity for use after your study. In some cases, the software may simply provide a content-related game for students to play near the end of your lesson.

The length of time you spend in a program will vary greatly depending on the type program you are using. With some software you may only be at the computer for 10 or 15 minutes. With other software, you may be at the computer almost the entire lesson. For these lengthy programs, be sure to plan plenty of time at the computer.

There are times when you might be using two programs in combination –viewing story content in one, and following up on that content with a puzzle, quiz or reflection activity in another.

Depending on your lesson needs and the software you have, you may address the class as a whole throughout their software use (example: “I’d like everyone to pause for a moment and look over here”) or you may simply provide direction and some time-keeping help to your helpers throughout the lesson while they are at the computers (a “tip” sheet or “talking points” sheet for the volunteers is often appreciated). After using the software, you will mostly likely bring everyone back together around a discussion table for some Q & A and reflection. Because the kids would rather “play at the computer” it’s important to be consistent about these expectations and reinforce them at the beginning of each lesson.

Getting the Materials

- Check to see that you have the proper software and the correct number of CDs for the computers you will use. Please obey copyright laws and only use the software on as many computers as we have paid for.
- Print the additional software teaching materials from www.sundaysoftware.com/tips
- Look at the guides and technical tips for your software so that you are aware of any potential problems and can quickly solve them. www.sundaysoftware.com/tips and www.sundaysoftware.com/support

Preparation & Previewing

- Read the lesson, Bible story, and background materials.
- Test the software ahead of time on each computer where you will be teaching. This is especially important if you have different types of computers.
- Go through the program with its guide in hand. Highlight portions to focus on or skip.
- Be aware of how long it takes to complete certain software activities, and make sure you plan enough time for them at the computers during your lesson.
- Consider age appropriate adjustments –many of which are suggested in the online outlines.

Beginning the Lesson Plan

- **At the beginning of every lesson**, tell the students what you hope they’ll learn today. Don’t save it until the last 5 minutes of class. (And tell them *why* it’s an important lesson to you and to their faith.)
- **Outline the lesson plan** on the board from start to finish. Label each step with how much time they will be spending in there. This will give your students a sense of structure and expectations, and it will help your other volunteers get up to speed.
- **Write out the software’s key points, content and instructions** on the board: “Here are the sections in the program we will be looking at, here’s what to do when you get to this point, and here’s what I want you to skip.” By writing it down for everyone to see, you’ll not only help your students and volunteers, it will be a good refresher and guide to you as well.

Neil* writes: *“Of all the advice I’ve given about teaching with software over the years, I can’t stress these ‘beginning steps’ enough. They put the students, volunteers and me(!) at ease with clear expectations.”*

Closing for the Day

1. Check the CD drives and put away the software.
2. Shut down the computers using the operating system’s shut down method.
3. Check to make sure the monitors and speakers are turned off.
4. Remember to turn off the lights and lock the door behind you (if needed).

In Conclusion

Yes, this *is* more involved than teaching with popsicle stick crafts or watching a DVD! ...but we are also hoping for better results. The kids will be ecstatic about your lesson and want to come back for more. If you have any software and lesson questions, check with our contacts listed below, or email Neil@sundaysoftware.com.

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Our Teaching and Tech Support Contacts:

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