



**Director's Handbook**

# Welcome

Thank you for choosing FreeVBS's Robot Academy Vacation Bible School for your church. We know directing VBS can feel like a huge undertaking but we've created this Director's Handbook to walk you through the process and help make sure all of your bases are covered.

## Where to begin

- **Prayer:** The best place to start is always prayer. Ask God to lead you towards His will and plan for your church and community. Begin praying for the kids that will attend and pray for the adults that will be leading them. VBS can be a great time of spiritual growth not just for kids, but adults and the church as a whole.
- **Review All Material:** As the director before you pass out the curriculum to your teachers it is important that you yourself have read through all the material. This way you'll fully grasp the plan for the week and are prepared to field any questions your team might have. Making notes that are specific to your church can be very helpful and save you time later.
- **Get Advice:** If this is the first time you're directing VBS for your church speak with the individual(s) who have done it before you. Learn what things have and haven't worked in the past. Also find out approximately how many children you should expect to attend

## Staff

- **Leader Recruitment:** Begin recruiting your major players as soon as possible. It is best to get your head teachers and area leaders in place first. Use whatever method works best for your church, whether that be an announcement during service or personally asking individuals you think would be best for the job.
- **Additional Help:** After you have the bones of your team established a good way to fill out your team is to have your current staff invite people to work alongside them. Holding additional sign-ups and pairing people up works great too. VBS presents a wonderful opportunity to build relationships, so the more time a group of people has together the better. You'll certainly get last minute offers of help, but try your best to have everyone assigned to an area as early as possible.
- **Background Checks:** If your church uses a background check service be sure to have all the necessary paperwork filled out for each staff member.
- **Teacher Meeting:** Once your staff is in place announce the dates of your teacher meetings. We suggest having at least two. One to pass out the curriculum and explain the theme and a second to address any questions and review your plan for the week.

## Administrative Responsibilities

- **Classroom Assignments:** Based on the information you gathered from past experience assign a space to each teacher and area leader. Giving them significant notice will allow them to better know how to decorate and use their area.
- **Schedule:** We have found our curriculum works best when spread over a two hour period broken into six 20 minute sessions. You can find it along with some other schedule options at the end of this handbook. Choose or make up a schedule and share it with your staff during your first meeting.
- **Drop Off and Pick Up:** A lot of churches have a standard process they use when parents drop off and pick up their kids. If your church does simply make sure your staff understands it. If your church does not, decided what will work best for a group of your size, then take time to review the procedure with your entire staff.
- **Discipline and Accident Procedures:** Again, most churches have such policies in place. It's a good idea to review these things regularly even if everyone has worked with children before. If your church doesn't have such procedures in place speak to the individuals in leadership to find out if that's a step your church should take.
- **Mission Project:** One of the most fantastic things about VBS is the opportunity to share your faith with others around the world. Take some time to pray about what mission project the Lord would have you do. We highly recommend working with World Vision. Their online catalogue is quite extensive and offers items for purchase that will fit any budget. Most importantly they do great work for God's kingdom. Once you've decided what you'd like to raise money for, choose how you'd like to go about doing it (ie: working as a team or holding a competition between classes or genders). Once you have your plan set share it with your staff. It's also a good idea to have an individual who will explain the cause to the children and get them excited about it every day.

## Preparation

- **Curriculum:** There are a variety of ways you can get Robot Academy curriculum into the hands of your staff. Some people may prefer to have everything printed for them. Others may be happier to just have the .pdf forwarded their way. Do whatever works best for your group. All of the Robot Academy Cartoons and song videos are available on YouTube. If your church doesn't plan to use them straight from the web, use the included files to burn DVD/CDs for your team.
- **Collecting Materials:** At FreeVBS one of our goals is to not only provide a program that is free to use but also cost effective to put on. All the items needed for each area are easy to come by and inexpensive. Based on how many kids you're expecting, make a list of the items your church doesn't already have and ask your congregation to donate them. Allowing people to give gets them involved and excited about what you're doing.

- **Purchasing Materials:** If you'd rather purchase the materials (or have a few items that weren't donated) get them as far ahead of time as possible so your area leaders and teachers will have them to work with. If you'd prefer, allow those individuals to do the shopping themselves.
- **Prepping Crafts:** Of all the areas of VBS crafts requires the most preparation. A number of items need to be readied for the children before the start of the week. We suggest you use the opportunity once again to get more people involved. Individuals who may not otherwise be able to help in VBS often are willing and able to do some cutting, taping and painting. It's also a great chance for your crafts leader to step up and organize a prep day him or herself.
- **Decorating:** We encourage not only teachers and area leaders to decorate their rooms, but directors as well. Generally the director would handle common spaces, particularly the entrance. Making lockers out of paper and hanging them on the walls, or building robots out of cardboard boxes will add a wow factor that will not only excite the kids, but show parents the time and effort put into your church's ministry for kids.

## Advertising and Extras

- **Announcements:** The best way to get kids into your VBS is to personally invite them. Make sure your congregation knows when VBS is happening, get them excited about it, and send them out to invite the children in their lives.
- **Printable Advertisements:** In the weeks leading up to VBS customize the included postcard files and have them printed to advertise Robot Academy. We recommend UPrinting.com. They do great work for a great price. Plus, you can use our images and add your own text with their customize tool. Or simply print the advertisements in house. Then send them out, give them to your congregation to pass out, and hang them around town to announce the upcoming fun.
- **Banners:** An eye-catching way to get the word out is by using one of the Robot Academy banners. Either edit the included files to display your church's information or have it printed as is and use sticky-back vinyl letters to announce the dates and times you've chosen. ESigs.com is a site we use regularly because of their quality work and excellent prices. They also offer an easy to use customize tool which allows you to use our banner as a background and add your own text.
- **T-Shirts:** Also included in your downloaded material is a T-shirt image. You can send this file directly to a screen printing shirt company or if you prefer, purchase printable iron-on T-shirt transfers and do it yourself. Make sure to collect sizes from your staff ahead of time. Customink.com has a huge selection and gives discounts when you order multiples. We recommend using their "chat" feature to get the best price.
- **Web:** The internet is probably the greatest advertising tool you have. Not only is it often free, but information is easily shareable. Make sure your church's website is up to date with

all the VBS happenings. Offering online registration is a great option and one we're seeing parents use more and more. Set up events on social media and invite everyone to share it. Instagram photos during the week of all the fun. With all the web banners, video trailers and clip art you'll find is included the possibilities are endless.

## Closing

Again we'd like to thank you for choosing FreeVBS's Robot Academy VBS. If you have any questions about the material contact us through our website. We're happy to help. We hope and pray God will use you, your church and this curriculum to show the faith of His people. And we look forward to hearing all about it from you. Once your VBS has concluded, don't be a stranger. Send us your comments, and suggestions. Anything you share will help us improve this and future programs. Don't forget to check back for more curriculums coming soon.

## Sample Schedules

**Suggested Schedule** – We have tested our programs using the following schedule. The program takes two hours and children are broken up into groups based on age/completed grade level. Game and snack time are shared with games taking the first 12-15 minutes and snacks taking the last 5-8 minutes. Teachers are responsible for playing the cartoons, teaching the verses and lessons, and can spend time in the workbooks. All of this happens in their own classrooms.

	Preschool	K – 1st	2nd – 3rd	4th – 5th
20 minutes	Opening & Music			
20 minutes	Lesson	Games & Snacks	Crafts	Lesson
20 minutes	Crafts	Lesson	Games & Snacks	Lesson
20 minutes	Games & Snacks	Lesson	Lesson	Crafts
20 minutes	Lesson	Crafts	Lesson	Games
20 minutes	Closing & Music			

**Cartoon and Story Area Schedule** – In this schedule children are still separated by age/grade level, but don't have a designated classroom. Instead, they travel to an area to watch the cartoon and listen to the lesson, and then to a second area to learn the verse and work in their workbooks. This schedule is best used if all of your classrooms aren't equipped with televisions (or streaming devices such as tablets or laptops), or if you don't have enough volunteers that are willing/able to teach.

	Preschool	K – 1st	2nd – 3rd	4th – 5th
20 minutes	Opening & Music			
20 minutes	Cartoon & Lesson	Games & Snacks	Crafts	Cartoon & Lesson
20 minutes	Crafts	Cartoon & Lesson	Games & Snacks	Verse & Workbook
20 minutes	Games & Snacks	Verse & Workbook	Cartoon & Lesson	Crafts
20 minutes	Verse & Workbook	Crafts	Verse & Workbook	Games
20 minutes	Closing & Music			

**Rotating Group Schedule** – In this option children travel together in groups of about five, and are led by a helper/guide. Each group should include a variety of ages. Older children are encouraged to help younger ones. Several groups come together at each area and participate

as a whole. This method is best used when you have a large number of volunteers looking for a low-key way to serve. (Teenagers are often excited to volunteer for this type of job.)

	Groups A – D	Groups E – H	Groups I – L	Groups M – P
20 minutes	Opening & Music			
20 minutes	Cartoon & Lesson	Games & Snacks	Crafts	Cartoon & Lesson
20 minutes	Crafts	Cartoon & Lesson	Games & Snacks	Verse & Workbook
20 minutes	Games & Snacks	Verse & Workbook	Cartoon & Lesson	Crafts
20 minutes	Verse & Workbook	Crafts	Verse & Workbook	Games
20 minutes	Closing & Music			

**Music** – As you'll see in every option we suggest two sessions of music. We do this for a number of reasons.

- When kids arrive late or get picked up early (and they will) it's easier and less disruptive for them to jump into or leave music than any other area.
- The songs of Robot Academy are not only catchy but educational. They all include a Bible verse from the week and reiterate the important lessons of each day. Kids will be learning even when they don't realize it.
- Inviting parents to see their kids perform the music from the week is a great way to get families into your church the Sunday after VBS. By adding an extra session of music you ensure kids will know the songs well enough to sing them for a group.

**Notes** – While we find a two hour, Monday – Friday program works best for us, our programs can be adjusted to your group's needs, whether that means running the program one day a week for five weeks or abbreviating each session for a shorter program each day. Talk to leaders of the past and find out what works best for your church.