

Preschoolers at Friendship Trek

Preschoolers are a valuable addition to VBS! At *Friendship Trek*, preschoolers learn in their own settings and rotation groups. Opening, closing, and activities at rotation sites for older kids are not appropriate for preschoolers.

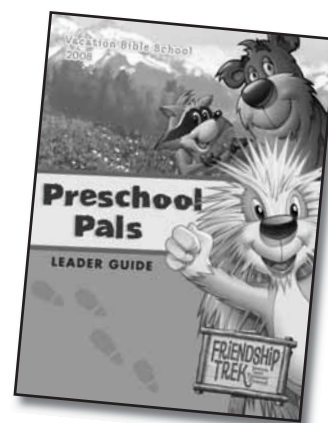
Because VBS is often a preschooler's first group experience, parents and children may feel anxious, timid, or afraid. Even those who are familiar with the church or volunteers may be anxious about a new setting, helpers, and peers. A separate space gives preschoolers age-appropriate activities and experiences with minimal stress and chaos. Preschoolers won't get lost among older kids. They relax, play, and feel more secure.

Friendship Trek activities let preschoolers explore and experience Bible truths in the ways that young children learn. It's true that preschool-age children are too young to grasp abstract concepts of faith, but their sense of wonder and curiosity makes it easy for them to believe in things they can't see. They live in the moment and love to learn. Preschoolers love to explore using their five senses. They enjoy drama, music, and movement. They like to worship, sing, and pray. Preschoolers enjoy expressing their love for Jesus, their friend and Savior!

Friend 2 friend

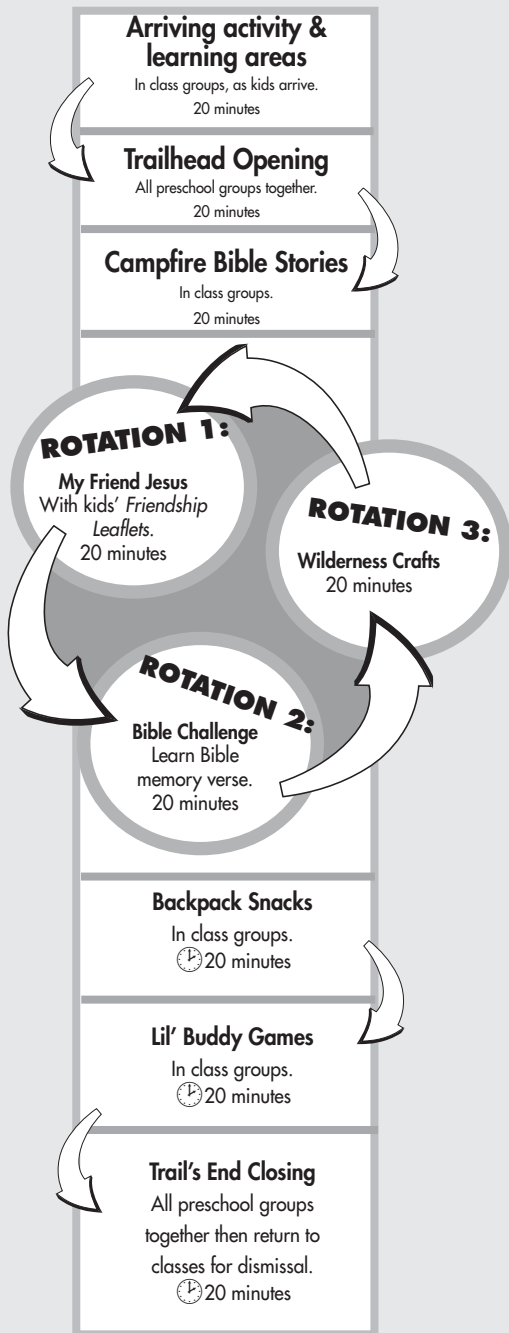
Consider preschoolers' needs as you prepare their *Friendship Trek*.

- Recognize physical limitations. Give preschoolers rooms near restrooms and outside play areas.
- Acknowledge special emotional needs. Many preschoolers do not adapt well to new situations. Leaders need to have activities ready beforehand so they can welcome children and parents and address any concerns.
- Require parents to sign children in and out for safety and a smoother transition from home.
- Because attention span and ability varies widely among preschoolers, even those of the same age, use a variety of shorter activities. Learning areas allow children to explore at their own pace and developmental level. *Friendship Trek* recommends letting children play in the learning areas when they first arrive. Kids want to stay and parents appreciate the easier transition. See *Preschool Pals Leader Guide* for details.
- Preschoolers need consistent people and routines to feel safe and learn well. Use the same schedule every day to provide security and predictability.
- Preschoolers are full of energy. Preschool leaders need to be energetic to keep up with their delightful, inquisitive kids.
- Bigger kids may intimidate preschoolers during outdoor play. Schedule outside play in a different area or at a different time than older children.



track it!

Preschool Sign In & Out Sheet, p. 133

PRESCHOOL SCHEDULE**Cherish preschool volunteers**

Look for preschool volunteers who are loving, patient, caring, and have a strong desire to share Jesus with young children.

Do everything you can to help your volunteers succeed. Get enough volunteers. Everyone benefits from more hands. Children receive adequate attention and care, volunteers share tasks and responsibilities, parents can share important information or concerns.

Recruit a leader or helper for every four to five three-year-olds and six to seven five-year-olds. Make sure every leader has a helper, even in groups with fewer children. Limit group sizes to help volunteers meet each child's needs. Many Directors limit preschool groups to twenty children and set up other space if needed.

Use room size to decide how many children to assign to each space. A common guideline is to have thirty-five square feet per child. You need space to have three rotation sites at the same time.

Preschool Pals schedule

Preschoolers enjoy a variety of group sizes and activities each day. As they arrive each day, kids and parents do a brief activity with the *Friendship Trek Poster* from the *Preschool Pals Bible Pack*. Then let kids explore interest areas as others arrive. Hike to Trailhead Opening with all preschoolers, then return to class groups for the Bible story and three rotation groups. Enjoy snacks and games, then meet everyone again for Friendship Summit Closing.

Same-age or multiple-age groups?

You need to decide whether to put preschoolers in same-age or multiple-age groups for the three-site rotation.

Mixing three-, four-, and five-year-olds in groups lets them experience some of the same benefits as mixed-age elementary groups. Older children love helping younger ones learn. Cooperation increases as children share tasks and discoveries. Many early childhood educators recommend this strategy.

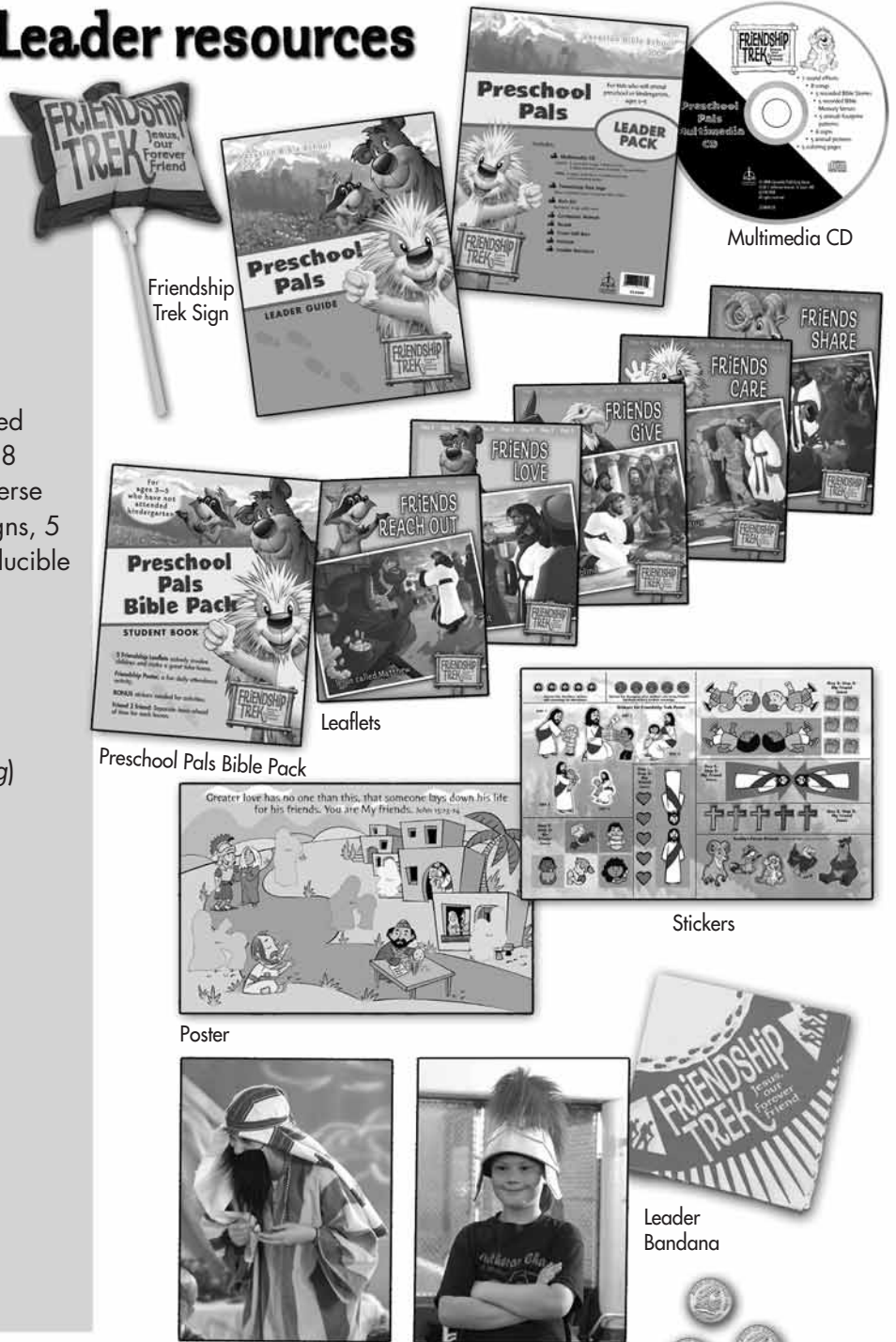
Assigning preschoolers to groups with children their age may make teaching easier for inexperienced leaders since there is less diversity in children's skills and abilities.

Carefully consider the benefits as you decide which group type to use at *Friendship Trek*.

Discover Preschool Leader resources

Preschool Leaders need these essential *Friendship Trek* resources.

1. *Preschool Pals Leader Guide*, in your *Starter Kit*
2. *Preschool Pals Leader Pack*, 32-0840
 - Multimedia CD with 5 recorded Bible stories, 7 sound effects, 8 songs, and 5 Bible memory verse rhythms; plus 5 patterns, 6 signs, 5 animal pictures, and 5 reproducible coloring pages.
 - Leader Bandana
 - Centurion Helmet
 - Beard
 - Rich Kit (necklaces, coins, ring)
 - Friendship Trek Sign
 - Incense
 - Cross Gift Box
3. *Preschool Pals Bible Pack*, 32-0860
 - 5 leaflets
 - Friendship Trek Poster for a coming-in activity
 - Self-adhesive stickers needed for all activities.
 - Order one pack per child.
4. *Buddy Porcupine Puppet*, 32-0881.



Friendship Trek Sign

Multimedia CD

Leaflets

Preschool Pals Bible Pack

Stickers

Poster

Leader Bandana

Beard

Centurion Helmet

Rich Kit

Buddy Puppet

Lil' Buddy

Don't forget Buddy & Lil' Buddy!

Preschoolers meet and interact with *Buddy Porcupine Puppet* every day at opening and closing. They'll love having their very own *Lil' Buddy*. He's a fun toy and a friend!