

SECRETS TO A SUCCESSFUL DISCOVER TIME

The Art and Science of Effective Hands-on Learning Toolbox II

Suggested Session Length: 60 minutes

PowerPoint Available: Secrets to a Successful Discover Time

Audience: Experienced DT Leaders (those who have been in that role for a year or more)

Slide 1

Introduce yourself and share why you love Discover Time.

Slide 2

Why do we value Discover Time?

God created us with different learning styles.

Every person learns differently; this is why DL strategically focuses on multiple learning styles throughout the morning.

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7 Learning Styles*

Visual (spatial): You prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding. (Props in the lesson; Bible timeline; Feel Right Poster)

Aural (auditory-musical): You prefer using sound and music. (Worship; creative responses during the lesson)

Verbal (linguistic): You prefer using words, both in speech and writing. (All)

Physical (kinesthetic): You prefer using your body, hands and sense of touch. (DT; hand motions)

Logical (mathematical): You prefer using logic, reasoning and systems. (Lesson; problem-solving during DT's)

Social (interpersonal): You prefer to learn in groups or with other people. (DT teams; small groups)

Solitary (intrapersonal): You prefer to work alone and use self-study. (Tracker's Treasures; Art Station; testing)

*Source: <http://learning-styles-online.com/overview/>

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God created us to learn differently, and Jesus taught with this in mind!

- Parables (Verbal)
- Multiplication of fish (Physical, Social)
- Healing of the blind man (Visual)

Yes, Jesus taught in the temple, but He also taught using hands-on experiences.

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Definition and purpose of Discover Time

Discover Time (DT) activities are designed to engage elementary and preschool students and challenge them through hands-on learning. Through the DT, they will experience an emotion or response that will help them personally connect to the Bible lesson. Occasionally the DT activity will be used to make a “memorable picture” of the Bible lesson for students, often including the feel, smell, or taste of something in the Bible narrative.

Discuss with a partner: What words pop out to you when you read this? (Engage, challenge, hands-on, experience, personally connect, etc.)

These are great words. Do they describe the Discover Time activities you lead?

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The skeleton of Discover time

1. Read your curriculum.
2. Know the 4 Rights.
3. Think through how you will execute the DT.
4. Double check supplies.
5. Plan where to use keywords.
6. Be capable of using the 5 count to capture the students’ attention.
7. Practice giving clear instructions.
8. Prepare to have fun with an energized and positive attitude.

Discover Time activities are not just stand-alone, fun activities! It is extremely important to understand the goal of the DT and how it connects to the lesson. If the leader does not understand the big picture of the day, and how the elements of the program fit together to teach those key points, the DT becomes meaningless.

This often becomes one of the biggest weaknesses of the DT Leader. They become overconfident in leading a fun activity, and they forget they are supposed to be **teaching** a key element of the lesson through the activity. It’s hands-on **learning**, not just a hands-on activity.

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Learn how to polish your Discover Time.

What does this mean? If you were a beginning musician, you would start by playing individual notes. You might have your brother play along on his plastic recorder. But the more accomplished and polished you become, the more you transform into a real musician. The notes become a form of art, and you become sensitive to the other musicians around you. You begin playing together like an orchestra. This is what we are aiming at!

How do we achieve this?

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Know the big picture and understand why you are so valuable.

Your DT is often the #1 thing that families talk about on the way home. Here is what kids often say when talking to their parent or caregiver about their time in Discovery Land...

- We made a smoothie.
- We went to the Sand Station.
- We played Simon Says.

Are you satisfied with those answers?

You want your DT to be clear enough and purposeful enough that it becomes part of a bigger statement.

What if your student could say something like this:

“We played Red Light - Green Light. It was really tricky to obey the leader. That’s kinda like Jonah. We learned about him. He had a hard time obeying God. I’m like that, too. But I know it’s important to be obedient to God. He wants the best for me.”

When kids can link the DT to the lesson, DL leaders in their various roles are playing together in harmony.

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What happens if the teacher does not refer to the DT?

1. Show grace; the teacher is packing a lot into their Bible lesson. New teachers especially may occasionally forget.
2. Tie it all together when you lead the end-of-class review game.
3. Maybe you didn’t cover the main point of the DT like your teacher expected, and they didn’t know how to weave it in. Ask how you could improve in the future to make the activities connect more clearly to the lesson they are planning.
4. Send an email during the week letting the teacher know you are excited about the DT. Ask the teacher if they have any questions.
5. Have fun and chant the key words as you walk back to class. This will reinforce the key point of the activity in the students’ minds.
6. Thank and encourage the Teacher when they weave in the DT well!

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Practical pro tips for DT Leaders

1. Pay attention to the volume of your voice. Speak so everyone can hear.
 - a. Huddle up for instructions with the whole group.
 - b. For women, as you speak louder, be careful not to raise your pitch too high.
 - c. Ask students and leaders if they can all hear.
2. Expect good eye contact.
 - a. All eyes should be on you.
 - b. Get attention using the 5 count.
 - c. If a student refuses to pay attention or to obey, the Teacher or Shepherd should step in so you can focus on the group.

3. Plan for it to be awesome!
 - a. Remember that everyone wants to be part of something awesome!
 - b. You will not have behavior issues if students are experiencing something great.
 - c. If you don't think it will be awesome, ask your leader how you can enhance it. For example: Your class is playing Red Light - Green Light. You are given two pieces of construction paper (red/green) to hold up. You think it is kind of boring for 5th graders, so you enhance it by borrowing referee shirts for the other leaders and making a t-shirt with red on the front and green on the back for yourself, so you can flip the colors in a way that gets students' attention. You also paint your face red and spray the back of your hair green! When the first student wins, you shoot off a surprise confetti cannon. YOU CAN enhance it to make it awesome!
 - d. Remember, your DT will be awesome if every creative idea contributes to the main point of the learning experience. (Eliminate anything that distracts from it.)
4. Remember that every second counts. From the moment you transition from Worship to DT, you should be engaging with your kids. Potentially use that time to put them on teams, having them chant a keyword, or say the Think Right verse of the week.
5. Provide age-appropriate competition. Elementary DT's often include competition to keep the activity fun and engaging. Letting everyone win is counterproductive because:
 - a. It sends the message to the students that their decisions during the activity don't actually affect the outcome. They will stop trying (especially the older students).
 - b. Students won't trust your instructions in the future.
 - c. It may diminish the connection between the DT and the lesson.
 - d. Kids thrive when they have a real chance to earn the title of "winner."
6. Value team unity
 - a. How do you make each student feel like they belong? Make every person on their team feel valued during team events, no matter their gift mix. If a student is "slowing down" a team, a Shepherd or Teacher should help make the student more successful.
 - b. Encourage students to high five their partner or team members at the appropriate times.
 - c. Create team cheers during a relay. Teams do not need to be quiet during the DT unless the purpose of the specific DT requires it.
7. Know your students. The more you know your students, the more you can highlight their gifts and contributions to the team. John and Judy are great artists; they can be the Pictionary artist for each team. Tim and Tera can create with Play-Doh really well; let's make sure they are on opposite teams.
8. Use your Lead Teacher and Shepherd! Let them know in advance that they will be team leaders so they dress appropriately and are ready to be a good team coach (or whatever role they will play). They should not stand to the side, but rather participate, help lead, and watch students' reactions.
9. Make sure all students participate in this learning activity because they are an important part of the team. If they disconnect during the DT, they often disconnect the rest of the morning, and there is a high chance they will disconnect from coming. Positive words to that child are important. Figure out

what they are good at and engage them. If a child has special needs, an assistant should help them to feel included.

10. Use students' names. This helps students feel like they belong and are important. "Billy, you are doing an awesome job! Benji, you are so fast! Beverly, you are an amazing artist."

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"Discover Time Planning Sheet" and "Discover Time Debrief"

The Discover Time Planning Sheet will help guide newer leaders toward a successful DT. The Discover Time Debrief will help leaders evaluate their DT, identify areas for improvement, and plan accordingly. As with any sport or instrument, private instruction may be needed.

These lists are not intended as an evaluation tool for the Director to evaluate the DT Leader each week. Instead, they can occasionally be given to the DT Leader as a personal checklist with the encouragement to evaluate themselves and fine-tune their skills.

Hands-on training idea:

Print and hand out the planning sheet (or share a fillable digital version). Choose a DT activity from the curriculum for the trainees to plan and prepare. When the planning is complete, choose a strong leader to lead the DT activity for the other trainees. Then walk them through the debrief questions. Be sure this is not used as a time for criticizing, but as a time for encouragement and growth, to strengthen DT's in the future.

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End by speaking words of encouragement over the leaders and praying for them.

Discover Time Planning Sheet

Use this sheet to plan out your Discover Time activity.

Step 1:

- ☐ Read the entire lesson.
- ☐ Read the goal for this week's DT.
 - ☐ Is the DT a hands-on learning experience?
 - or-
 - ☐ Is it a "memorable picture?"

Step 2:

- ☐ Think through the steps and process of the Discover Time in your mind.
 - ☐ Will students be divided into teams? _____

 - ☐ How will you divide them? _____

 - ☐ How will you give directions? _____

 - ☐ Will you need the support of the Lead Teacher and the Shepherd? _____

 - ☐ What supplies will you need? _____

Step 3:

- ☐ Weave the "Do Right" point into the activity.
 - ☐ What is the Do Right point? _____

Step 4:

- ☐ Plan for fun! _____

Discover Time Debrief

1. Were the kids engaged? (1 being not engaged and 10 being extremely engaged)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Was time used efficiently?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. When the kids left, did they hear the key words or experience the emotion the DT was supposed to highlight? (if applicable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Were Teachers and Shepherds engaged?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Were the students respectful?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Did students connect as a team?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Did you use students' names?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. Could everyone hear when you spoke?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. Were you pumped and excited about the DT?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. Did you hear the DT experience mentioned in the Bible lesson?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10