



CATCH UP!

HOW TO: ORGANIZE AND FACILITATE A CHILDREN'S CLUB



Red een Kind (ReK) is a Christian, child-focused development organization working with local Partners in Asia and Africa. Internationally the organization is known under the name Help a Child (HAC).

Help a Child wants every child to have a loving and dignified existence and a promising future.

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This document is part of the **CATCH UP!** package for children's clubs:

- **CATCH UP!** How to organize and facilitate a children's club
- **CATCH UP!** Activities Book
- **CATCH UP!** Training

This complete package is available at the knowledge portal
<http://howto.helpachild.org>

WELCOME!

You would like to start a children's club in your area. That is an important and grateful task!

This document contains all information and tips you need to know before setting up a children's club. The document is divided in two parts: **how to set up a children's club** and **how to facilitate a children's club**. The first part tells you how you can start a club, how you find your volunteers and what is important to know about children. After that, in the second part, it shows you important facilitation skills that can be used at the club! Is your children's club already set up? Then skip the first part!

First read this 'how to' really well before you start. What do you need for the club? Which steps do you have to take? It is all included in this book! When you have read it you know what to do. When you are setting up a children's club, keep on checking this book. You can use the checklist at page 15!

For the children's club you can use the **activities book** for all kind of activities. This activities book comes with a **training**. Aren't your volunteers trained yet? Ask the Help a Child office for advise by sending an email to childdevelopment@redeenkind.nl.

By conducting this training, you help to develop children's groups! We all know that children in a group will learn a lot, through play and from each other. That is important for their development. The volunteers will learn to facilitate the children's clubs well and it will influence the development and wellbeing of a lot of children. Good luck!

Note: In this 'HOW TO' document the gatherings for children are named 'children's clubs'. It is possible that your 'clubs' are named different and that is fine. Every time this document says 'children's club', fill in the name you use for the gatherings.

Note: This document is specifically aimed at 'the children's club'. It is of course possible that you, as a project officer, head up for more children's clubs. Just read this 'HOW TO' for the clubs and check what you can use to make every unique club better.



HOW TO: ORGANIZE



THE CLUB



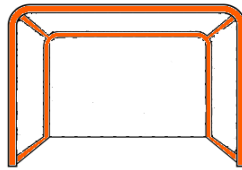
In this chapter you will find all the important things you have to think about before starting a children's club.

The goal

The most important thing of all is: what is the reason you want to start a children's club, what will be the goal of the club? What do you want to achieve? Make that clear for yourself before starting to organize other things. It is important to know your goal so you can share it with others, like the children and their parents. Having a clear goal is a good starting point for setting up a children's club, and it determines the rest of the steps you will have to take.

A few examples of goals are:

- Giving children the opportunity to develop themselves
- Supporting children in exploring new things
- Creating opportunities for children to make new friends
- Challenging children to search for their talents
- Offering a safe place for children to enjoy themselves
- Supporting children to understand what it means to have rights

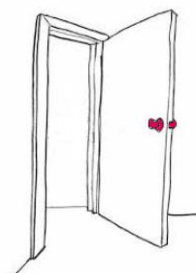


The place

Where do you want to organize the children's club? Try to find a safe place that is accessible for most of the children in the neighborhood. Safe in a physical way, but also in an emotional way. What place in the community is best suitable for the club? Is the place safe enough: is it a strong building and/or playground? Aren't there any dangerous items in the ground or sharp pieces on a fence? And if there is no building available: what do you do with rain?

But also: will the children feel free enough to be themselves? Or is it a place where people interrupt easily? Will the children feel safe in that building and can you create a good atmosphere in there, without children bullying or being bullied at?

Once you have found a good place to organize the children's club, still be aware of this point. During the club gatherings, always be aware of the fact if the place is still safe enough for children.



The time

The next question is: when do you organize the children's club? For sure school and church are a bigger priority than the club, so make sure you don't plan the children's club during school or church time. After school or on a Saturday would be a good time. Think about what is fitting best for the children in your neighborhood. Do most of the children have to help at home after school? Then the weekend is a good idea.

Also think about the time and duration of the club. Don't plan the club too late, for example late in the evening. Children can be really tired after a long day, so playing active games in the evening is only more exhausting. And you do not want children to walk back home in the dark! Don't let the children's club take a really short time, but also don't make it too long. Children will lose their attention and get tired. For example, about 2 hours is a good directive.



The frequency

How often do you want to organize the children's club? Most common is to organize the club once a week, each week on the same day. In this way children know the club is always on the same day, same time. That will be good for the stability of your children's club.

Is once a week a bit too much for you? Try to find what fits you and your volunteers, once per two weeks is also fine.

Once per month is a bit too little, children might have forgotten what they have done last time, it does not stimulate continuation. For example, when a child is sick that day or has to go see an aunty, it misses for two months! Then it is not easy to reach your goal.



The program

It is important to prepare the children's club gatherings well. Make sure that when the club gathering starts, you and all the volunteers know what to do. At the start of the gathering, tell the children in short the program of the club, so they know what they can expect. It helps to have a clear start and a clear ending of the club gathering. For instance, use a song, a dance or a yell at the start of every club gathering so the children will know: the club has started now.

It is good to put the focus of the children's club on playful learning: let the children have fun and learn something new at the same time. Playful learning is the most natural form of learning. It challenges children to come in action and move their borders. Playing helps children in developing themselves. Playing influences the development on cognitive, social,

emotional, moral and physical skills. Children get to know the environment and learn to solve problems. They also learn to listen, to work together and to handle frustrations or fears.

So summarized, playing games at the children's club will support them in growing up and developing themselves! The CATCH UP! activities book for children's club is really useful for setting up programs for the club gatherings. The book contains 5 different themes you can attend to in the gatherings. The book tells you why the theme is important in the development of children, it contains a bible story about the theme and it shows a lot of games you can play with the children!

A possible set up of a children's club gathering, based on the activities book:

1. Welcome the children and start up a song, a dance or a yell
2. Short group conversation about the theme of the gathering
3. A short and easy game to introduce the theme
4. A bible story about the theme with questions and prayer
5. A game about the theme that takes a long time
6. Singing a song (maybe you know a song about the theme)
7. Another game about the theme that takes a long time
8. Short talk with the children about what they think of the club today and an invitation for the next club gathering
9. A last short game about the theme as closure of the gathering

Use the activities book as an inspiration. Think of games you played when you were young or sports that are fun to do. Make the club gatherings alternate, introduce new games or stories to keep the children interested and motivated.



THE VOLUNTEERS



In this chapter you can read everything you need to know about volunteers for the children's club.

Find volunteers

To start a children's club you need volunteers. Think of where you can find good volunteers. Search for people who have experiences in working with children, taking the lead and organizing. It is good to have volunteers who are motivated to work at the children's club and who really want to support children in their development.

Finding volunteers can be difficult. First make your goals clear and know what kind of club you want to start. Then start sharing it with others, so they know that you are looking for good volunteers and they can search with you. It is also possible to share it in church or at other places where a lot of people come together.

Make sure there is a balance between the number of volunteers you have and the number of children joining the club gatherings. A good directive is at least 1 volunteer for about 10 children and at least 2 volunteers per club. So in case something happens, one can deal with the situation and the other one can deal with the other children.



Tasks

Give the volunteers different tasks. At first it is good to appoint someone (or more, when you have a lot of volunteers) as a head-volunteer. This head-volunteer is the leader of a small group of volunteers. The head-volunteer can divide tasks among them and when the volunteers have questions, they can ask him or her. The head-volunteer can discuss things with you and the organization.

The tasks that can be divided by the head-volunteer are for instance telling a story, preparing and explaining a game, doing a prayer or observing and correcting the children. Make sure the task fits the volunteer and the volunteer is motivated to do it.

The head-volunteer can also organize meetings for the volunteers to discuss the program of the next club gathering, to give space to ask questions, to think of new things to do at the clubs and to evaluate the club.



Teambuilding

When you have found several volunteers, don't immediately start the club activities. First make sure the team of volunteers get to know each other, each other's strengths and weaknesses. It is good to first make it a real strong team so the children's club starts stable. For teambuilding you can use games from the activities book for the children's clubs. By playing the games the volunteers are getting to know each other, get experiences in working together and they also get to know the games they can play with the children later on.

Recommended is the CATCH UP! training about organizing a children's club and how to use the activities book.



Evaluation

Evaluation is always good to do. There are a few different styles of evaluation.

The volunteers can evaluate the club activities: what is going well and should go better? Besides that, it is good to evaluate the progress of the club, done by the project officer, together with the volunteers. And also, evaluate the volunteers, how are they doing? Discuss what has to be achieved, when it is going to be achieved and by whom it is going to be achieved.

Questions that can be discussed during an evaluation can be:

- How is the teamwork going?
- What went well in the last club gathering?
- What should go better at the next club gathering?
- What do the children really like at the club?
- Which children are difficult in the group and what can we do about it?
- Etc.

Discuss with each other what you can conclude from the evaluation, what the points of action are and who is going to do it.

Evaluation per person is also possible, but be aware of the way how you do it. Before you say something, think of how you would find it when someone says that to you. A good way of giving feedback is by using 'tip' and 'top'.

First, start with a 'top', a compliment. Tell the person what you think he or she did really well. Then after that give a 'tip', something that can be done better next time. Always bring your message from yourself, so say "I think you are really good at telling stories!" or "I saw that you

started explaining the game before all children were quiet, maybe next time you can wait with explaining until the children are quiet, I think that will be better for you and for the children”.



THE CHILDREN



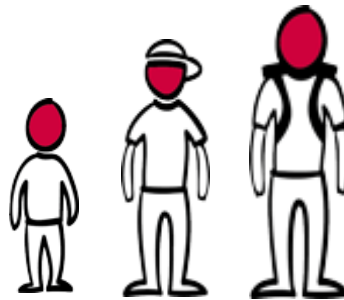
In this chapter you can read all about what is important for the children at the club gatherings.

The age

Think, before you are starting the children's club, for what age you want to organize it. Of course it is nice to give all children of all ages the opportunity to participate in the club, but it is not always useful to do. When you put children of 6 years old in the same club as children of 16 years old, the older ones will not think the club is a cool thing to go to, because of the young children. They need different things, different activities and different themes than the younger children. You better organize 2 different clubs, one for the young children and one for the older children.

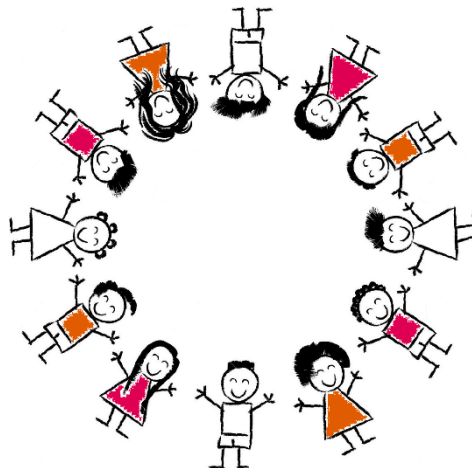
For instance:

- Saturday morning from 10 – 12 am for children from 6 years old to 12 years old
- Saturday afternoon from 3 – 5 pm for children/youth from 13 years old to 16 years old



The size of the group

Depending on how much children are coming to your children's club and how many volunteers you have, constantly think about if you can handle the group. When children are inviting friends and the group of participating children is getting bigger and bigger, see if you can split up the children's club. When the group is too big, it is not fun for you to organize it because of you have to yell to reach the children, they don't listen, you are not able to play the games anymore, or things like that. Also for the children it is less fun if they can't hear you, if they



can't participate in games or they have to wait for their turn that long. Think about a maximum of 30 to 40 children.

Evaluation

Also for children it is good to evaluate the children's club gatherings. Give them, for instance once a month, the opportunity to tell what they think about the club. Gather the group together and talk about the club.

- What do you like the most?
- What do you like less?
- What kind of new thing would you like to do at the club?
- Do you feel safe at the club?
- How do you feel about the volunteers?
- Etc.

If the children can write, let them write down the answers. Give them the chance to do this anonymous, so they can really share what is on their hearts. The children's club is organized for the children, so it is very important that they are having a good time!



CHECKLIST



A checklist to check if you have completed all points before you can start a children's club.

- Make a plan**
- Make clear your goal**
- Find volunteers**
- Work on training & teambuilding**
- Create a program**
- Make sure people know the children's club is going to start**
- Invite all children**
- First club gathering!**
- Invite all children to the second gathering**
- Evaluate with the volunteer team**
- Make a program for the second children's club gathering**



HOW TO: FACILITATE



FACILITATION



In this chapter you can read about everything that is important while facilitating a children's club.

Facilitation in general

Facilitation is not so easy. An effective facilitator has the skills to organize, to plan, to observe, to ask the right questions, to challenge, to rephrase and to summarize. Also he or she has qualities like enthusiasm, commitment, approachable, flexible and so on. Of course you do not have to possess all skills and qualities, but it is good to be aware of it and practice.

Some people think facilitating is the same thing as teaching. But that is not true at all. Look at the schedule below to see the differences.

A teacher...	A facilitator...
Starts out with his own knowledge	Starts by assessing the group
Follows a learning plan	Considers new ideas and issues identified by the group
Lectures from the stage	Uses practical, participatory methods
Provides information in one direction	Makes sure the information flows in all directions
Believes in teaching 'the right answer'	Encourages and values different views
Has a formal relationship with his pupils	Considers participants more as 'equals'
Tells the answer/solution to people instead of letting people figure out from themselves	Asks questions instead of answering questions himself

We recommend you to participate in the **CATCH UP!** training to learn more about facilitating a children's club. It is better to hear things twice and be well prepared than to get in to difficult situations and you do not know what to do.



Club rules

From the first club gathering, make clear the club has rules. It is important for children to know from the beginning what they are supposed to do and what they are not supposed to do. Remind them of these rules often.

Make up your own club rules, preferably together with the children at the 1st club gathering. You can ask the children what rules will be important for their club, For instance:

- Listen to the one that is speaking
- Wait for your turn until you say something
- If you want to say something, put your hand up in the air
- Be respectful when we are talking about God
- Ask a volunteer if you want to go to the toilet

When making the rules, think of the usefulness. Are the rules clear formulated? Are there not too many or too less rules? Are the rules realistic and achievable? Are the rules appropriate for the age and level of the children?



Speaking to the children

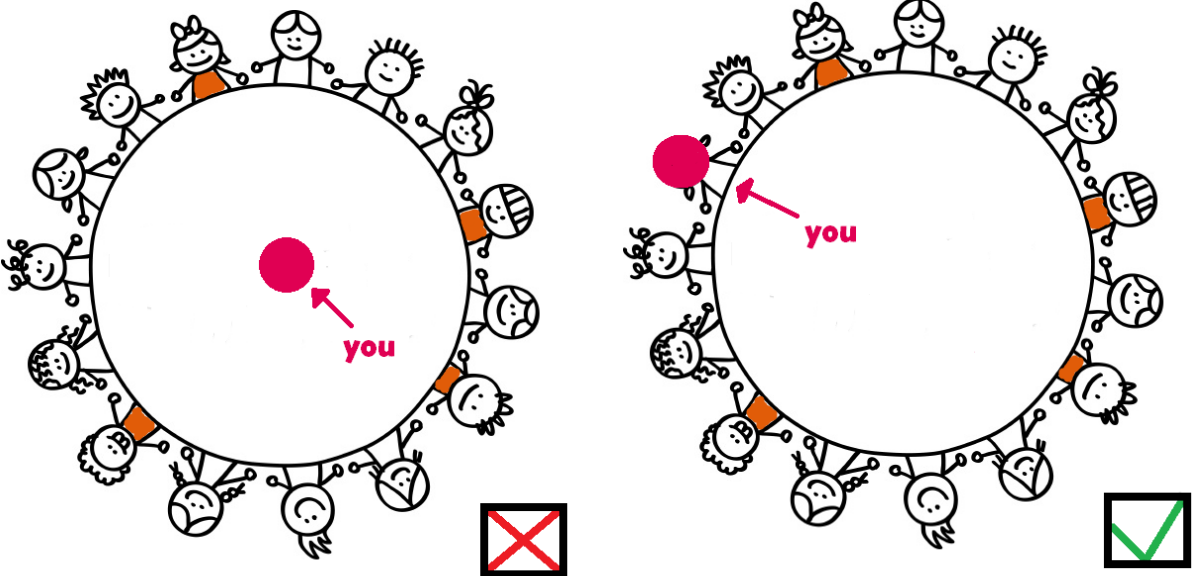
There are a few important points that are good to be aware of while speaking to the children:

- The duration
- The place you are standing
- The volume and articulation

Children can be good listeners, but in general, the time they can concentrate is short. The younger the children, the shorter they can concentrate. So when you are talking, for instance, explaining a game, don't talk too long, since children will get bored and stop listening. Tell the most important information about the game, but then switch over to showing the game or letting the children try out.



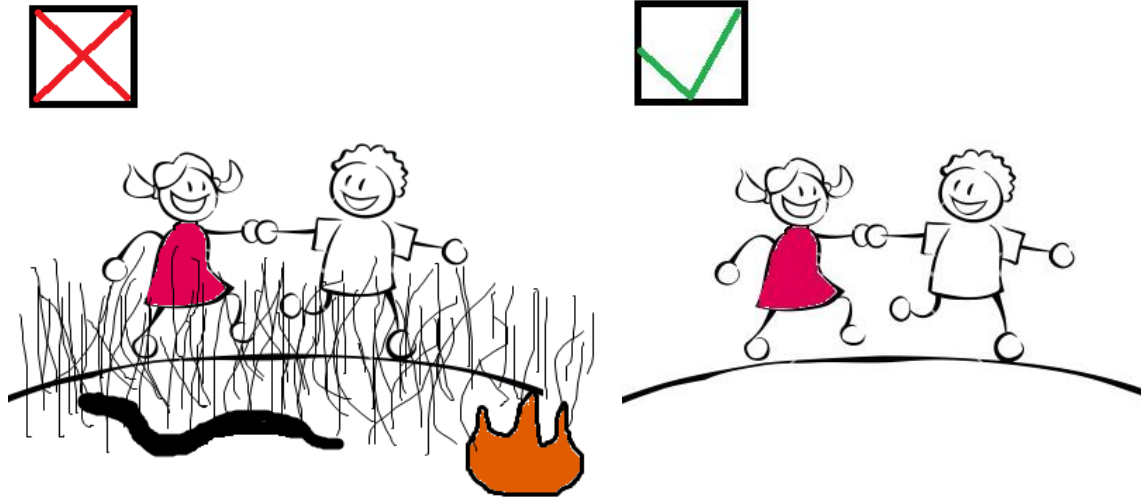
When you are explaining a game or telling a story: think about where you are standing. Make sure all children can see you, and you can see all children. In that way they can focus on you, and you can check if they are listening or if they are distracted. For instance: When you and the children are standing in a circle, do not stand in the middle: the children behind you can't see you and you can't see them. Stand in between the children, in the circle, so everyone can see and hear you and you can see everyone.



When you are speaking to the group of children, make sure you have a good volume and all children can hear you. Also articulate your words well so everyone can understand. So speak loud and clear to avoid confusion and repeating the instructions often.

Safe place

The place where the children's club is organized needs to be a safe place. Check the surface before the children's club starts. Are there any obstacles? Are there any sharp things in the playground? Be sure that there is no danger and the children can play safely.



Social and emotional safety

Be aware of the social and emotional safety in the group. Watch the children interacting with each other: how is it going? If children are arguing, fighting or bullying, go and talk with them and make up a plan with them to ensure it will not happen again. That is also why it is important to include children in making the rules: it is their club and all children should feel welcome and respected.

If you are just starting up the children's club then think of games how they can get to know each other and respect each other. First play easy games so they get used to everyone before playing more difficult and exciting games. There are good examples of cooperation games in the activities book.

Be aware of the kind of games you play. It is good to create a certain variation. Maybe at your children's club there is a child who cannot run so fast, so other children will not give him or her a turn. Or maybe there are children who prefer acting, instead of always playing sports. Make sure there is variation in the games and sports you play so every child can make some fun. Remember that every child has its own qualities and talents. Give them the opportunity to use them!

There are games with a blindfold and they are really nice. However, be careful with playing these games. If the children know each other, feel safe with each other and would like to use the blindfold, then it is ok. But when a child is new at the club and doesn't know everybody yet, using a blindfold can be really scary for the child. Then give the option to let the child close his eyes (without blindfold), so when he is feeling unsafe he can peek a little with one eye. Always give the children the choice to be blindfolded or not. Remember: safety first!



Dedication

Be dedicated to the children's club! Care for the children and do your best to make every children's club gathering the best one. Show your interest to the children, make them feel loved. If a child missed the last club gathering, ask him where he was! Invite the children to bring friends to the club, let everyone feel welcome.



CLOSURE

Hopefully you have now a clear idea about how to set up a children's club. All the information in this 'how to' are guidelines, it is not the only good way to do it. If you are doing it in another way and it works, that's also fine. Don't forget to check the **activities book** and the **training** for children's club to make your club a success!

If you have any questions about this 'how to', the activities book or the training, contact childdevelopment@redeenkind.nl. It is possible to arrange a skype appointment to discuss the set-up of your children's club and prepare together with a member of the child development desk.

It's a really important and grateful job you are doing. Good luck! If you have great adapts or beautiful examples of successes, let us know!

Inge de Kroon
Ecological Pedagogue
Red een Kind, 2016



**"Failing to prepare
is
preparing to fail"**