

DAY 1 HACKS FOR PRETEENS

i wonder...

BY MIKE SHELEY

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES FOR PRETEENS

In children's ministry, you've got a wide range of ages you need to engage every day, but preteens tend to get overlooked, so here are a few adjustments you can make to this day in order to keep your preteens more engaged.

MUSIC | Worship in Wonder

Add these songs to the pre-service mix or use them during worship:

- ["God of Wonders"](#) by Third Day
- ["Countless Wonders"](#) by Chris Tomlin
- ["Wonder"](#) by Hillsong UNITED

ACTIVITY | Straw-ry Rockets

In addition to or in place of this activity, have preteens create an acrostic. They can write their name down along the vertical edge of a piece of paper (if you have time, use both first and last names). Then, have each kid write one unique characteristic about themselves that starts with each letter of their name. It could be an experience they have had, a physical attribute, an interest, or something unique about their family.

ACTIVITY | STEM Self-Portraits

Using the same frame and cardboard, have preteens use pencils to lightly sketch a rough self-portrait guide. Then, have them use different colored ink pads to color their thumb and fingers before pressing down on their sketch and making their self-portrait with their unique fingerprints and thumbprints.

QUESTION | Have you ever wondered?

Ahead of time, draw a giant outline of a question mark on poster board or paper with a bold poster marker. When you get to this activity, give preteens three to five minutes to write out as many questions of wonder as they can. Have them use fine-tip markers and put one question per sticky note. When time is up, have them add their thoughts to the poster board or paper, overlapping but completely covering the question mark.

ACTIVITY | Moving Stories

Turn this into a type of Charades by having the audience guess what scenario you gave the volunteers. You can also have preteens suggest their own scenarios.

ACTIVITY | God's Handiwork

Instead of a rocket, have a printable for preteens that is a silhouette or outline of a body, and draw in body parts. Have lines like you use to identify objects in a diagram connecting to: eyes, lips, teeth, tongue, nose, mouth or a speech bubble, fingers, feet, and toes. Then, share the facts about our uniqueness from this page on [Answers in Genesis's site](#). Have preteens write the corresponding unique trait with each line on the picture.

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MUSIC | Worship in Wonder

Here are some fun worship songs from Rend Collective you can use to connect with your preteens:

- ["You Will Never Run"](#)
- ["My Lighthouse"](#)
- ["Rescuer"](#)

ACTIVITY | There's an App for That

Work this out ahead of time to have two or three preteens who can demonstrate these apps on devices. You can connect them to a TV with a simple adapter to make it easier for everyone to see.

REFLECTION | What Gifts God Gave Me

If you are not familiar with mind-mapping, check out [this post](#). Give each preteen a sheet of paper and some colored pencils. At the center of the page, have them write their name in a circle. Then, out from the circle, draw branches to the words Mental, Physical, Natural, Learned, Words, and Music. From each of these new branches, they are to add more branches that have a word or short phrase describing something about them that fits that branch. When they are done, preteens will have a great resource to take home, reminding them how gifted and complex they each are!

MEMORY VERSE | Memorable Gifts

Have all the supplies set up in an area where preteens can work but where younger children will not see them. Ideally, have the preteens do all preparation work for the “gifts” ahead of time. If that’s not possible, have them work on this at some earlier point in the day. Preteens will gain a great learning experience in serving while—intentionally ironically—using their gifts to help others learn about using their gifts!

DAY 3 HACKS FOR PRETEENS

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MUSIC | Worship in Wonder

Consider using "[Love One Another](#)" by the Newsboys. You can play the actual [music video](#) as a pre-service element and then use the lyric video for the kids to sing along with during worship time.

ACTIVITY | Numbers Game

Use five dice instead of three and increase the number range to 24. Also, you can award as many "steps" as dice used to make a number. (For example, if the number is 6, the team would get 1 step if they used 1 die showing 6, and 3 steps if they used 3 dice showing 2 each.)

ACTIVITY | Stop Motion Movie

Preteens are known for consuming a lot of YouTube, but they are also great content creators. Recruit a team of preteens to put together a 30-second stop motion video as an example you can show the kids for what their final project can look like. As a bonus, have someone film a short "behind the scenes" video of the preteens making their stop motion video. They can share fun ideas and helpful tips for the kids to use when they make theirs.

REFLECTION | What I Can Learn from Others

Hand out sheets of paper and colored pencils or pens. Have preteens hold their paper in portrait position, then fold the paper in half from top to bottom. They will then fold the paper in half again from top to bottom and again in half from side to side. Once they've made all their folds, have your

preteens unfold their papers to reveal a grid of eight rectangles. Have each kid neatly print their first name in the first box and write or draw something about them that others may not know. They will then hand their paper to someone else and do the same writing or drawing. Repeat this until the papers are full or everyone has participated. When kids get their original paper back, not only will they learn a little more about their friends, they will also have a list of names of people to pray for this week as a way to love them!

RESPONSE | Many Faces to Love

There's a chance you might have a preteen who can solve a Rubik's cube quickly. If so, have them demonstrate their ability live or record a video (a video is recommended so you can edit it and play it as fast as you want). And just to show all the kids how fun and possible it is to solve a Rubik's cube, you can show them [this video](#) of a three-year-old solving it in less than a minute!

ACTIVITY | Animated Action

In addition to this activity, give each preteen an index card and a pen. On one side, have them write down just the first name of a person who is challenging for them to love. On the other side, have them write down a specific action they are going to take this week to show love to that person. Encourage them to put their paper somewhere in their room where they will see it every day to remind them to follow through on their plan and to pray for this person.

DAY 4 HACKS FOR PRETEENS

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MUSIC | Worship in Wonder

Since this version of "[This is Living Now](#)" includes the rap, get two or three of your preteens to learn it and jump in to lead that part! "[Together](#)" and "[In Your Light](#)" are additional songs you could use about how we live out our faith together.

ACTIVITY | Upgrade an Invention

For preteens, challenge them to "activate features" of what they already have to help them spend time with God.

- For example, do they have a device with reminders or alarms? Have them set an alarm or reminder for a specific time that repeats every day to remind them to read their Bible.
- They could take a picture of a Bible verse or even of a physical Bible and make that their lock screen to remind them to read their Bible before they use the device.
- It could also be non-tech. They could put a sticky note on one side of the door to their room or of their desk or mirror. When they see it, they will remember to read their Bible and can move the note to the other side of the door or desk. Before they go to bed, they can reset it for the next day.

These are just a few examples. Encourage preteens to brainstorm and think of some that specifically work for them.

POLL | Spending Time

Many preteens are or will soon be aware of this fact and many have a tool on their devices that shows them a “receipt” for exactly how they spend their time, like [Apple’s Screen Time](#). Have preteens make their own screen-time page, but focused on spending time with God. Have them make a key that shows what each color is for (same as the choices listed here). Then have them make a simple chart showing how much time they will spend on each from when they wake up to when they go to bed.

BIBLE STORY | Living For God

Preteens need guidance but want to do things on their own. Help them with both for the habit of reading their Bibles with a few suggested reading plans—or even just introducing them to what reading plans are through “[What is a Reading Plan?](#)” then pick a reading plan to go through together:

- [Live a Life of Worship](#) (6 days)
- [Focus](#) (6 days)
- [Shiny Influence](#) (6 days)
- [Bible experience for Preteens](#)

SNACK | STEM Appétit!

Sometime before this activity, show your group of preteens [this video](#) from 2018 of a Rube Goldberg machine created to pour cereal with a new spin! Then, challenge them to come up with a Rube Goldberg machine to mix treats. It probably won’t be as elaborate as the one in the video, but it will be more complex than the ones kids will make that day. Allow them to really have fun with this and show the other kids what can be done working together with creativity.