

DAY 1 HACKS FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

i wonder...

BY KIMBERLY DORPENYO

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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

MUSIC | Worship in Wonder

For every worship session, use simple, repetitive actions. If kids can't do the actions, provide space for them to jump or move the way they need to move (be prepared for hands and arms to flap—this is often a form of stemming). Have noise-canceling headphones available for friends that could experience over-stimulation. Have buddies to dance with kids in wheelchairs.

ACTIVITY | Straw-ry Rockets

Many friends with special needs will need help cutting and writing. Helpers can either put their own hands over the child's hands to guide them or take the child's hands over their hands as they cut and write. For those who cannot do either, have a few rockets pre-made. You might also consider getting straws of different lengths and diameters to make it easier to push the air out.

BIBLE STORY | Created and Saved by God

Utilize story-sequencing pages ([like these](#)) to help kids focus and have an easier outline to follow. Have the initial question, two to three key points, and Big Idea pre-printed. They can be glued, taped, or adhered to poster board or foam core with [Velcro dots](#). Try out this hack for every Bible story and Discussion time!

ACTIVITY | Moving Stories

Many friends with special needs learn better from visual cues. Either have slides, posters, or cards

with the story on it so they can see as well as hear the scenario. They may need help actually acting. Be sure to have noise-canceling headphones available.

OBJECT LESSON | Created for Good Works

Have kids stand in the front and hold the items. If they need their own area during the object lesson, set up a playhouse in the corner so they can actually put everyday items in different spaces of the house.

MEMORY VERSE | STEM-ory Stack

Have the memory verse pre-printed on parts of robots and have the kids glue the robot onto paper or stick magnet robots to cookie sheets.

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ACTIVITY | There's an App for That

Give kids the printable of the phone with the apps, and a second copy with all the apps cut out. Have kids glue on the apps on the corresponding space on the printable as it is talked about.

ACTIVITY | Build-a-Bot

Include your friends in a team and provide a one-on-one. For kids who would rather work individually, provide sheets [like these](#) so kids can build sticker robot.

MEMORY VERSE | Memorable Gifts

Write the words of the memory verse on gift boxes, one word per box. Line up the boxes and have the kids recite the verse. Then turn a box around so that the word doesn't show, and have kids say the verse while supplying the missing word. Keep turning boxes around until they can recite the verse without any words showing.

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ACTIVITY | Bubbling with Love

Have items pre-measured in larger tubes or beakers. Alternatively, give kids a tube of bubbles and have them play in a separate area.

POLL | What is unconditional love?

Create a visual for unconditional love, like a full heart, and a visual for conditional love, like a heart in a circle with a line through it. Hang these visuals on the wall so the kids see which heart to move to when given the statements.

ACTIVITY | Stop Motion Movie

Include friends with a one-on-one and give them one specific task, preferably something that allows some type of movement. Playdough would be a great option here. If our friends need their own space during this time, have tables with [magnetic tiles](#) or playdough set up in the corner of the room.

ACTIVITY | Animated Action

Have some pre-made flipbooks for kids to color.

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ACTIVITY | Cloud Soap

Give kids pieces of paper with an outline of a cloud on it. Have friends glue cotton balls inside the cloud.

VIDEO | "How Do I Pray?"

Give each kid a pipe-cleaner and give them a bead of each color:

- Red – Admit to God a mistake you've made.
- White – Ask God to forgive you.
- Yellow – Thank God for something.
- Purple – Praise God.
- Green – Ask God for help.
- Pink – Pray for someone else.

This activity helps to learn color, practice fine-motor skills, and keep their hands busy. They can twist the pipe cleaner like a bracelet around their wrist. Print out the directions in color for kids to take home, and feel free to shorten or modify this list!

RESPONSE | Periodic Table of Evidence

As a supplement or replacement for this activity, have an [empty periodic table](#) pre-printed for kids. Provide stickers or labels of things they may be grateful for and let them decorate the periodic table.

MEMORY VERSE | Towering Verse

The tumbling blocks may overstimulate some friends, so have [cardboard blocks](#) with the memory verse on them in a different area of the room.