

JUST AS MEDIA IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR WORLD TODAY,

it's also becoming more common in our ministry to kids. Whether it's a new video, music, game, or communication tool, evaluate media to ensure it adds value and deepens kids' experience. Use these six TRAITS as your media checklist.

T TRUTH TELLING

Does it confuse fiction with reality?

We work to make the Bible real to kids. When we use terms such as “characters” and “story” in teaching, we can leave the impression that events in the Bible are fictional, much like Disney characters and bedtime stories. Likewise, media can confuse truth with fiction. Screen media before you share it with kids to ensure it presents biblical events as reality and doesn't create confusion in kids' minds about the Bible's historical truth.

R RELEVANCY

How relevant is the media to kids' lives?

Media must reflect what kids experience daily. They need to see, hear, and experience people like themselves—whether through gender, race, characteristics, or experiences. They need to understand why it matters to them. For media to be effective, kids need to be able to relate it to their daily lives.

A APPROPRIATE

Is it appropriate?

Age-appropriateness and appropriate content go hand in hand. Something that's funny and edgy to a preteen may be terrifying to a younger elementary child. And material that younger kids enjoy may seem babyish for older kids. Ensure the media you're using is appropriate for the age level you're working with. Additionally, be careful that all media contains appropriate content, especially if you're pulling it from common Internet sources.

I INTEREST

Does it capture—and keep—kids' interest?

Media that's outdated, boring, or (to use kid lingo) “lame” will lose kids faster than you can ask, “Where'd you go?” Kids are natural media critics, born with the digital world at their fingertips. So be discerning when considering all media. Something that looks or sounds like it was made in 1985 will get eye rolls—and it'll undo your good intentions of enhancing what you're teaching.

T TOTAL PICTURE

How does it fit with the big picture of what you're teaching?

When you consider the overall message you're teaching or that you want kids to walk away with, ask how the specific media complements that effort. Decide what's important, valuable, or desirable for kids to take away—then evaluate whether the media helps accomplish that. Ultimately, what purpose will the media serve? Will it enhance kids' understanding or make them think differently? And most telling, would it matter to the big picture if you left out the media?

S STIMULATE VS. STAGNATE

Does it encourage children to ask questions, use their imaginations, or be active or creative?

Media isn't effective if it exists to fill time or if it leaves kids in a passive state. Effective media will get kids moving, asking questions, thinking deeper about a topic, worshipping, or just doing something they weren't before. Ensure your media choices stimulate thoughts and actions rather than suppress them.