Online VBS Guide

Adapting Rocky Railway into a VBS-at-home experience
Stay on Track!

At Rocky Railway, kids explore Jesus’ power in them and how we can trust Jesus—not our own strength—to pull us through life’s challenges. COVID-19 has come through our lives like a freight train and derailed countless plans, routines, and expectations. This summer, more than ever, the kids in your community need the hope, reassurance, and abundance of God’s love through the unique ministry of VBS. The Bible Points for Rocky Railway are so relevant.

**JESUS’ POWER HELPS US DO HARD THINGS. Trust Jesus!**

**JESUS’ POWER GIVES US HOPE. Trust Jesus!**

**JESUS’ POWER HELPS US BE BOLD. Trust Jesus!**

**JESUS’ POWER LETS US LIVE FOREVER. Trust Jesus!**

**JESUS’ POWER HELPS US BE GOOD FRIENDS. Trust Jesus!**

We all need to trust Jesus’ power to pull us through these unprecedented times! This summer, your church has an opportunity to meet families like never before through VBS.

Take a breath, pause, and pray. And don’t give up. With some planning, creativity, and faith, you can make VBS happen—no matter what. If physical distancing prevents you from having traditional VBS at your church, these adaptations can help you steam forward with an innovative, online experience. We’ll guide you to stay on track, using best practices for blending technology and hands-on learning to maximize the online VBS experience.

Here’s what we do know:

- Parents are overwhelmed.
- Kids and parents miss connection.
- Kids and parents miss the sense of community that comes from VBS.
- Online VBS needs to be simple for families yet also interactive, engaging, and relational.
- We’ve longed for ways to bring faith into the home—and God has opened the door for this opportunity.

That’s why we’ve modified these stations, allowing your smiling faces to be leading the station video segments. You’ll maintain relationships with your church and community, and you’ll be a warm, welcoming, encouraging neighbor for those you connect with. However, Imagination Station is the one exception: We’ve recorded Shannon, our field test Station Leader, to model how Sciency-Fun Gizmos transform into Jesus-style “parables” for kids to discover and experience tangible reminders of the day’s Bible Point.

Thank you for making an eternal difference by staying on track with VBS!

*Group’s VBS Team*
Planning

Begin praying for your church to embrace your online VBS. Ask God to open new ways to reach the hearts of children, families, and volunteers in your community.

Choose a format for your online VBS.
- Livestream or pre-record segments.
- Create VBS for families, backyard Bible club (groups of 10-20), or other gatherings that meet CDC guidelines.

- If your church is blessed with media resources to livestream or pre-record segments, consider reaching out to other churches in your community! Instead of sharing decorations, this year you can share technology!
- If you use pre-recorded segments, build daily excitement by posting the link on your website each day at your VBS start time.

Choose and publicize dates for online Rocky Railway. Remember that VBS doesn’t have to be five days in a row. You may want to connect with kids once a week for five weeks or divide the material into even shorter segments once a week all summer long! Get creative and keep your overarching ministry goals in mind as you plan.

Content

Plan the content and timeframe for your online VBS. We recommend planning content for no more than two hours. We’ve made sure the online experiences engage and involve participants, but realistically, kids are likeliest to tune in (and stay focused) for under two hours.

Online VBS Might Look Like This...

- Parents drive-up and get a VBS student pack, or volunteers deliver them to families.
- On your VBS start date, kids and grown-ups gather online for no more than 2 hours. Your team livestreams or shows abbreviated, pre-recorded segments of the following stations: Sing & Play Express | Bible Adventures | KidVid Cinema | Imagination Station | Rocky Wrap-Up

*Modifications for online versions of Preschool Bible Adventures and Preschool KidVid Cinema are also available.
Decide if you want a preschool track. If families have preschoolers and elementary kids, the experiences in the elementary guides will work just fine. However, if you want to host a special time just for preschoolers to tune in, you’ll find modifications to the Little Kids Depot Preschool Bible Adventures and Preschool KidVid™ Cinema stations.

Choose and recruit the team that will lead and be videoed for each station. Remember, you may not need an Imagination Station Leader, if you opt to use the video found at groupsamples.com/ModifiedVBS.

Turn every living room into a classroom! Grab your Rocky Railway Starter Kit Leader Manuals, and download the modified Station Leader tips for the following stations:

- Sing & Play Express
- Bible Adventures
- Imagination Station
- KidVid™ Cinema
- Rocky Wrap-Up

Station Leaders can access the modifications, print them, and cross-reference them with the Leader Manuals from the Rocky Railway Starter Kit.

Each day during your VBS week, your team will livestream or show abbreviated, pre-recorded segments of the modified stations.

Provide a student pack for each child. Kids have had to forgo school trips, family vacations, birthday parties, and sports. This is your time to bless them with a bag of excitement that also fuels faith! By supplying surprise resources for each child, you’ll build daily anticipation (a little like Christmas!)—and make each child feel special! Plus, the Group team has consulted with child psychologists and experts to determine which resources will be most meaningful to families during such an anxious time.

Check out the “Resources” section for more info on how Group has made it easier (and more affordable) than ever to get this cool cargo into kids’ hands!

Assemble an assembly team. At your church, create student packs filled with resources such as Bible Memory Buddies, Sciency-Fun Gizmos, Tracking With Jesus Bible Books, God Sightings Wristbands, and Sing & Play Express Music CDs. You can simply put all the supplies for the week into one bag per child, or (to make each day a surprise) put each day’s supplies into separate resealable plastic bags labeled for each day. Then you’d put all of those into one bag per child. If you make daily “surprise” kits, you can wrap the supplies in tissue paper so kids can’t see them.
God Sightings are more important than ever! God Sightings give kids practice in looking for evidence of God all around them. Guiding kids to look for God and thank him is key in helping kids cope with the uncertainty and loss they’ve experienced recently. At Rocky Railway, you’ll celebrate God’s goodness every day!

Here are three simple ways for families to celebrate and display God Sightings:

- Use colorful sticky notes to write or draw an image to represent their daily God Sightings. Post the notes in a window in the shape of a heart.
- Use chalk to write or draw an image to represent their daily God Sightings on their driveway or sidewalk. Think of how this colorful image can be a conversation starter with neighbors!
- Provide each home with a Paper Pop-Up Boxcar. These colorful pop-up boxcars (available from Group or your Group VBS supplier) can make a cool, themey “blessing box.” Let families write their God Sightings and drop them into the open boxcar. In the weeks after VBS, they can continue to “train” themselves to see God’s overflowing goodness!

Media & Technology

Connect with the media experts at your church, or identify other “tech gurus” you may know. (Teenagers can be a great asset when it comes to technology.)

- Enlist help to successfully livestream your VBS. Do a test before your VBS week!
- Round up a team to help pre-record station segments. Remember, a smartphone can create a high-quality video! Decide if you’ll broadcast these at the scheduled time of your VBS or share a link with families. Be sure to publicize the dates so families know when and where to tune in.
STREAMING PRE-RECORDED CONTENT

A “Live” event on Facebook streams at the same time for everyone, but you can also record it in case people can’t watch it at the designated time.

There are two options to stream a pre-recorded video “Live” on Facebook:

- using a third-party software
- scheduling a “Premiere” through Facebook

Both options will allow you to schedule pre-recorded content, make announcements in advance, have viewers watch and comment in real-time, and interact with comments in real-time. The only difference is that your video will either show “Live” or “Premiere” in the top left corner—that’s it!

If you have a media team or are confident with your tech-savvy skills, either option will work for you. However, if you’re a little less confident, scheduling a Premiere will be the way to go. Scheduling a Premiere will allow you to upload your video directly to Facebook without the hassle of connecting a third-party software to Facebook. At Group, Premieres are our preferred method of choice when releasing pre-recorded videos.

Below are helpful “How-to Guides” to get started using either option:

Basics: Going “LIVE” on Facebook:

Going “Live” With Pre-recorded Content Using OBS:
https://brightspark-consulting.com/live-stream-pre-recorded-video/

Other Facebook Streaming Software Options:
https://www.facebook.com/help/publisher/2771226942969318

Going “Live” Using Premiere:
https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-use-facebook-premiere-what-marketers-need-know/
COVID-19 Protocol

Always follow the CDC guidelines for your state and local government restrictions. When prepping supplies that will be distributed to kids, like the student pack, have a packing party. Volunteers can maintain physical distancing and wear gloves and masks as they pack supply kits. Safety first! If volunteers will deliver supplies to families, remind them to respect the 6-foot rule.

If you’re using the online content with a small group (such as a backyard Bible club), consider having a pool noodle for each child to use as a reminder to keep physical distance. Have wipes or disinfectant spray to frequently clean items. For instance, if you choose to lead games, have multiple sets of the games supplies so each Crew gets its own clean set. Also supply multiple hand-washing stations.

If you decide to include snack or want to recommend a fun treat for families to provide for their kids, consider preparing the daily Chew Chew Snack only using store bought items. For instance, on Day 3, instead of making the “coal,” purchase the Kellogg’s® Cocoa Krispies® Treats (https://www.kelloggs.com/en_US/products/rkt-squares-cocoa-krispies-product.html). Of course, you can also supply the list of ingredients and a picture of the finished result so families can purchase and prepare the recommended Chew Chew Snacks from Rocky Railway.

Adjusting how we do ministry will allow for ministry to keep happening! Your kids and families will thank you. You’ve got this!

Budget

Reprioritize your budget. We know budgets are tight and some have been decreased or frozen—but there’s good news. You need to decorate only one space for an online VBS, dramatically decreasing your decorating budget! You’ll also save by not preparing snack. Strategically invest your reallocated budget in what matters most: the relationships we establish with the kids and the resources we send into their homes. Meaningful resources may be the only Scripture or faith-related anything in a family’s home! We’ll show you what student resources we recommend a little farther down the track.
**Supplement your budget.** While it may seem that many are pinching pennies, people are looking for ways to make a difference. Oftentimes a modest financial donation gives individuals a chance to feel like they’ve helped out, when the gift of time is something they don’t have. Give your church members the opportunity to play a key role in your VBS through sponsorships or donations. By reallocating your budget toward in-home resources for each child, you’ll be sure to reach entire families with hope and the message of Jesus!

**Recruiting & Staff Training**

**You still need volunteers for an online VBS!** Just rethink how to use them. As you recruit, make sure your Station Leaders are comfortable being livestreamed or recorded. A bonus of pre-recording is the Station Leader can have a “take two” if necessary!

Crew Leaders are still important in establishing relationships with children. Consider having them pack the student pack with VBS essentials like Bible Buddies, Imagination Station Gizmos, and Tracking With Jesus Bible Book and then deliver them to their Crew members. Packing and delivering five packs is easy (and requires less time) for most volunteers, who would’ve been committing closer to 15 hours of their time during a traditional VBS. Just think how excited children will be to get a visit, even if it is 6 feet from the front door of their home, plus a cargo pack of fun. And how cool to know they have a Crew Leader praying for them every day of VBS. Next-level the relational aspect by having Crew Leaders reach out to kids after each day of VBS, checking in on the fun they had.

**Your decorating team has only one or two spaces to decorate!** One simple “set” will do, unless you want to also follow the decorating setup given in the Bible Adventures Leader Manual.

**Shift your staff training to online.** Utilize platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet for your volunteer meetings. These platforms allow you to share your screen easily with a PowerPoint or Keynote, so you can get everyone onboard. Be sure to address how station supplies will be gathered and content livestreamed or pre-recorded. We’ve included two blank Rocky Railway slide images at groupsamples.com for you to easily create slides for your staff training. Just add a text box and type in your content or add images.

**Keep your church safety protocols in mind.** If you’re planning a backyard Bible club, it’s important to maintain best practices when it comes to child safety.

- Remember that all volunteers working with children need to have up-to-date background checks. Additionally, a child should never be left alone with a noncustodial adult—even in a home.
Coaching your home-based volunteers about your church’s safety protocols protects them, you as the leader, and your church—and most important, it keeps kids safe.

Shepherd’s Watch provides easy, affordable, and thorough background checks for VBS volunteers. Learn more at shepherdswatchbackgroundchecks.com.

Resources

Student resources reinforce Bible truths long after VBS. Focus on the important things—student items are the core resources of the VBS experience. Reinforcing what kids experience in the livestream or pre-recorded station videos is key to making learning stick. As a VBS leader, you understand how kids learn best! When we teach like Jesus, we use something tangible (things we see, hear, taste, touch) to make spiritual connections that last.

Here are the student resources you’ll need with the modified stations. Most items come in packages of 10. You’ll need one of each item per child to include in the student packs you create. Crank up the Sing & Play Music CD and have a fun packing party!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ON-TRACK STUDENT RESOURCES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elementary</strong></td>
<td><strong>Preschool</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bible Memory Buddies (pkg includes 10 sets of Buddies, enough for 10 kids)</td>
<td>Bible Memory Buddies (pkg includes 10 sets of Buddies, enough for 10 kids)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking With Jesus Bible Book</td>
<td>Billy Boxcars (pkg of 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bold Blaster (pkg of 10)</td>
<td>Buddies Forever Game (pkg of 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope ’n’ Hover (pkg of 10)</td>
<td>Fun Friends Puzzles (pkg of 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Off-Rail Roller (pkg of 10)</td>
<td>Little Kids Bible Pack (Student Book) (50 sheets, enough for 10 kids)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetual Paper (pkg of 10)</td>
<td>Bold Blaster (pkg of 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Band (enough for 10 kids)</td>
<td>Hope ’n’ Hover (pkg of 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try This at Home Sticker Sheets (pkg of 10 sheets)</td>
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Order from your Group VBS supplier.
Allocate the money you save on the things you aren’t doing (such as decorating and snacks) to supply important student items. Get your church involved in building a VBS student pack for each child at your VBS. You can even add other fun items like sidewalk chalk to record God Sightings!

**Decide how families will get student resources.**
- Crew Leaders or other volunteers deliver the VBS student packs to the homes.
- Families drive through and pick up the VBS student pack at church.

**Station resources enhance online experiences.** There are a few poster packs that will visually reinforce what Station Leaders are saying. If you’re pre-recording the video segments, you need only one set of them.
  - Sing & Play Express & Rocky Wrap-Up: Bible Point Poster*
  - KidVid™ Cinema: Bible Verse Posters*
  - Little Kids Depot Bible Adventures: Bible Point Poster*, Bible Story Posters*
  - Little Kids Depot KidVid™ Cinema: Bible Point Poster*

**Decorating**

**Decorating for Rocky Railway has just gotten a lot easier!** You have to decorate only two spaces for an online VBS—the main set and (optionally) one other room for Bible Adventures.

Sing & Play Express, Imagination Station, KidVid™ Cinema, and Rocky Wrap-Up will all happen in the same space—we recommend using the main set area. Bible Adventures will be in another room.

Have station supplies ready to go on a table that can be easily carried or rolled into camera view. You’ll livestream or pre-record all station segments in those two spaces.

Here’s how to do it in a fast-track way!

**Main Set Simple as 1-2-3!**
1. Use the Rocky Railway Fabric Wall Hanging* to create your backdrop.
2. Create a 15-foot no-stress express using the Giant Train Poster Pack* mounted on foam core.

**Main Set Next Level**
1. Mount the Giant Bible Memory Buddy Posters* on foam core or cardboard.
2. Cut orange and yellow crepe paper* leaves to create awesome aspen trees out of tree branches and painted carpet tubes.
3. Design a depot with the Giant Decorating Poster Pack*.

*available from Group or your Group VBS supplier
Bible Adventures
While it’s not required, you may want to follow the day-by-day setup in the Bible Adventures Leader Manual. A few items you may not have in your supply closet:
  Big Blue Sky Fabric Wall Hanging*
  Stone Wall Plastic Backdrop*
  Wooden Plastic Table Cover*

Little Kids Depot
If you’re offering recordings just for preschool, you may want to decorate a wall in a room with the Bible Buddy Posters*, Bible Story Posters*, and Bible Verse Posters*. This will create visual interest when you lead Preschool Bible Adventures and Preschool KidVid™ Cinema.

Bonus: Decorating At-Home
Encourage your families to dig into their closets and get on Pinterest to create their own Rocky Railway environment! Have families take pictures of themselves in their own Rocky Mountains and post on your church’s social media. What a fun way to build community when we can’t be together!

Registration

Have kids preregister for VBS just as usual. Even though kids won’t be coming to your church, you still need to know who is participating. Set a deadline, ideally a week from the first day of your VBS. This will allow time for your packing party to create the VBS student pack and deliver them or have parents pick them up.

Your VBS Starter Kit comes with a free easy-to-use online management tool called VBS PRO, which includes registration. You can upgrade to VBS PRO Premium and auto-assign kids into Crews, allowing you to quickly give Crew Leaders the addresses they need if they’re delivering VBS student packs.

Follow-Up

Take the opportunity at the end of your VBS to reach families of children who don’t regularly attend your church. Kids love getting mail, so here’s a great way to invite them to participate in your weekly children’s ministry, as restrictions are lifted. They’ll be eager to get out and come to your church!

Use the themed clip art on the Clip Art & Resources CD to create a personal invitation from all the Bible Memory Buddies at Rocky Railway.

*available from Group or your Group VBS supplier

Full steam ahead and stay on track for planning your VBS!
ROCKY RAILWAY VBS PERMISSIONS FOR ONLINE VBS USE

GRANTED PERMISSIONS FOR ONLINE VBS PRESENTATIONS

Who can use these permissions?
These permissions are granted solely to the church or organization that purchased the Rocky Railway VBS starter kit.

What specific items are the permissions granted for?
- Rocky Railway Songs, music videos, and lyrics:
  - We Can Trust Him (Psalm 33:4)
  - Power Shuffle
  - Power in the Blood
  - Your Power Will Pull Us Through
  - This Train Is Bound for Glory
  - In You Alone
  - The Old Rugged Cross

- Other Rocky Railway Media:
  - Bible Memory Buddy Videos
  - Rocky Railway Skits Videos (sold separately)
  - KidVid™ Stories Videos

What types of online events do I have permission to use these items in?
- Livestream Events—online public or private presentations that occur one time live at a specific time.
- Recorded Events—online presentations publicly or privately available for viewing on demand.

How long are these permissions in effect?
You may take advantage of these permissions until 9/1/2020. Specific timing stipulations for the type of event are as follows:
- Livestream Events—Permission for one-time use for the duration of the live event until 9/1/2020.
- Recorded Events—Permissions granted for a 30-day period from the time the event is first posted online or 9/1/2020, whichever occurs first.
DENIED PERMISSIONS FOR ONLINE VBS PRESENTATIONS

Copyrights for the following music items are not owned by Group and we cannot provide permission for these items to be used in any online application whether audio or video or lyrics. If your church has a CCLI license agreement, you can contact the copyright holder and inquire about online rights for your church use. That copyright information can be found in the packaging of your Rocky Railway Sing & Play Express Music CD.

Rocky Railway Songs, music videos, and lyrics:
(The) Same Power
Everywhere I Go
Lions

Can I use these items in a downloadable presentation?
No. Permission is not granted for download use.

Can I use the Rocky Railway VBS media items for online presentations that are not related to VBS?
No. Permissions are only granted for online VBS use.