

NEW VISITORS 50 ways to turn visitors into regulars

These ideas will help newcomers feel a part of your "everyday youth group" life.

1. **CHECK-IN CENTRAL** When kids arrive funnel them through a main check-in spot. Everyone gets greeted from the get-go and you can pass along the basics to every new kid.
2. **WEEKLY DRAWING**-Give away something every week. Require everyone to fill out an "info card" to be eligible for the drawing-you'll get each visitor's contact information.
3. **ALL-STAFF WELCOME**-Before your meeting begins-while kids are socializing-gather all your leaders briefly at your check-in spot. Have your check-in people quickly pass along information about new people so all your leaders can personally greet them.
4. **NAME GAMES**-Play one game every week or two that involves your kids' names-so everyone gets to know each other by name.
5. **REPEAT-A-NAME**- To help you and others learn the names of visitors, repeatedly use their names in conversation so others can overhear and learn.
6. **PICTURE BOOTH**-Set up a mall-like photo booth in your youth room where your guests can take their picture with the friend who brought them. Use a digital camera with a printer (or use a Polaroid camera) for instant photos. It makes for a great memento and a reminder to come back.
7. **PHOTO WALL**-Take photos of everyone, including new people, and post the pictures on a big bulletin board with each person's name for everyone to see and learn.
8. **PERSONAL PROFILES**-Keep a special organizer with you that has a section for teenager profiles. Start a new entry for every visitor; quickly jotting down any tidbits of information you glean during their visit. Listen for personal details (such as favorite hobbies and sports) for referencing later.
9. **ASSIGN ONE**-Assign one student leader to each new visitor to make sure new kids get connected with other kids in your ministry. Call your leaders "hosts" and coach them to recede into the background once their assigned visitors get connected with others.
10. **TARGETED AFFIRMATION**-If you don't already do a weekly affirmation segment in your meeting, start one. Ask your leaders to make sure they discover tidbits about your new kids that you can include during this time
11. **you've got mail**- have kids design glad you came post cards & send one to every first time visitor e-mail is ok; but snail mail offers personal attention
12. **FOLLOW-UP SURVEY**-Send a "How'd we do?" survey to either the new person or the friend who brought him or her (or both). Ask them about what did and didn't make them feel welcome. Use their suggestions to make your first impression even better!
13. **LEGOLAND**-Ask visitors to each write their name on a large Lego piece, then add it to your group's under-construction Lego tower
14. **"THIS IS OUR LIFE"** -Have your media nerds create a video or PowerPoint presentation introducing your group to visitors. Include information on who you are, past and future events, tips for success, the "in jokes" or phrases
15. **Free coupon**- send first timers a coupon for something free that compels them to come back. a free coffee, a little box of chocolates , or a cap with your youth group's logo on it.
16. **THE "YOUTH GROUP ENQUIRER"**Inquiring minds want to know... what your group is up to. So send every new person the latest edition of your group's newsletter.
17. **COOKIE CARAVAN**-Have your group members bake, bag, and freeze cookies every so often. Decorate the bags with ribbons; then have your kids sign a card that says: "It was sweet to have you here." Leave a cookie bag on your visitor's doorstep the day after youth group.

18. MEETING MENU-Help new people feel comfortable by displaying a schedule of the evening's activities by the entrance door. It also helps their parents know what's happening.
19. SAME-SCHOOL STICKY SALUTE-Have kids who attend a visitor's school decorate the person's locker with sticky notes that *say* "Glad you came!" or "Please come back"
20. AFTER-HOURS SERENADE-Have your kids work on a special welcome song (new lyrics to a familiar tune). After your meeting is over, give your visitors time to get home; then hit the road to their home with a team of student leaders who aren't afraid to look goofy and sing really loud (really loud).
21. EXTRA, EXTRA!-Make sure you have extra study books, Bibles, or devotionals to give to new people who show up. Nothing says "I wasn't expecting you" like no book to use.
22. A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION-When's the last time you took a hard look at how a visitor would experience your facility? Clean, straighten, and brighten-up your environment. Make sure your facility *says* "We care about this place...and you!"
23. PLAN YOUR WORK AND WORK YOUR PLAN Contrary to youth ministry folklore, flying by the seat of your pants does *not* make for a great event. Be ready and prepared; don't be running around at the last minute. Your event begins once the first teenager arrives, and that person could be a visitor.
24. SHOW THEM JESUS-Teenagers will return if you show them how to connect their relationship with Jesus to their everyday lives. Relevance is the bridge over troubled water that leads to Jesus.
25. FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALL-Hey, some old tricks still work today

REPEAT VISITORS

1. PURPOSE GIVEN-After new kids show up for two or three weeks, give them something to do. Make it a can't-fail job (in the beginning) such as organizing the refreshments or testing the electronics. If new people feel needed, they'll keep coming back.
2. CHECK-IN LIST -Add returning visitors' names to your permanent check-in list. They'll notice, and they'll know they matter.
3. DEVOGUIDE- Encourage your new people by giving them a daily devotional guide.
4. BASIC CORE BELIEFS-if you give each returning visitor a daily devotional, insert in it a flier with your ministry's purpose or mission statement a list of your faith tradition's core beliefs, and your contact information.
5. SCHOOL VISIT-They'll know they're "in" when you show up at their school with a batch of brownies
6. PARENT PACKET -Include a parents' devotional, your church's core beliefs, a youth group virtual tour; the latest youth ministry calendar; and any other information you have available.
7. PERSONAL VISIT-I haven't met a teenager yet who didn't want to show off his or her room to me. Call ahead and don't stay long.
- B. A BIBLE IN EVERY HAND-Show your new kids what really matters most by giving them a New Testament marked with your favorite Scripture passages. Have your leadership team pray over it; then sign the dedication page.
9. MAILING LIST -Make sure returning visitors get on your church & youth ministry mailing lists.
10. LEADERSHIP LAB-Test their leadership ability by giving them a game to lead or announcements to do.

11. SPIRITUAL GIFT/TALENT SURVEY -Have your regular visitors take a spiritual gift test. They (and you) might be pleasantly surprised! It's also a great way to positively label their uniqueness.
12. PASTOR HEADS-UP-Give your pastor a written list of your new people (along with any information about their families) so he can send a letter to each teenager and his or her family.
13. LEADERSHIP LOOP-Give other youth- connected leaders in your church a heads-up on the new kids.
14. ONE-ON-ONETIME-Find a way to give your "regular visitors" more of your attention-meet for coffee or ice cream.

INACTIVES BACK TO REGULARS

Kids sometime slip away from us. Maybe it's because they get out of the habit; sometimes it's intentional. Use these ideas:

1. MILK CARTON-Attach your MIA teenager's photo to a milk carton and write "Have you seen this teen?"; then mail it.
2. "MISSING" FLIERS-Plaster them around the church and ask kids who go to the same school to post them there.
3. "WE'VE MISSED YOU" MAIL- Create and send post cards signed by all the leaders after a teenager misses two weeks in a row.
4. "FREE DINNER" -Send your MIAs a coupon good for a free dinner at your group's next meeting. Or get a fast-food chain to donate a coupon. Send the coupon along with an invitation to meet you at a designated time.
5. MAIL/ PHONE BLITZ- Encourage other kids to e-mail or call your missing groupies.
6. SOMETHING SPECTACULAR-Invite your "accidental strangers" to a hard-to-turn-down youth event. Make sure they know there's no agenda other than to have a *good* time.
7. "MEMBER ALERT" NEWS REPORT-Have your media nerds Put together a missing person's report and e-mail it to the missing teenager.
8. "PUZZLED?" -Send them a small puzzle with one piece missing. Write a message on the puzzle telling them to come back to youth group for the final piece.
9. PARENT CHECK-Talk with the missing teenager's parents to see what's going on. Sometimes kids disappear because they've experienced a loss or a major change.
10. STUDENT CHECK-If all else fails, simply call the missing student and ask why he or she hasn't been coming.