



# Leading Middle School Online Small Groups

Online Small Groups with tweens is possible when you follow these Lead Small Principles:

## Be Present & Create A Safe Space

As kids log on you want to start connecting with them to help establish a sense of trust, safety, and community. That is done by giving a warm welcome and allowing the kids a few minutes to simply “hang” and chat. Then after a few minutes, create an environment that’s fun, engaging, and safe for them to want to join in on the conversation.

## Make it Personal

### 1. Say their name, often

- Knowing your student’s names helps them know that you are personally speaking to them and gives them clear purpose on video.

### 2. Give space for communication

- The ability to communicate differs for each child. It is helpful to give them plenty of opportunities to respond verbally, nonverbally or even in chat form!

### 3. Encourage and praise

- It is important to acknowledge a middle schooler’s voice. Be sure you’re paying attention to what kids are saying. Utilizing the chat is important and being sure you’re actually seeing what students are typing is, as well. Knowing they’re being heard and responded to will boost their engagement and help them understand that though you are not in the same physical room, you are still present and attentive.

## It’s Possible!

Keeping a bunch of chatty (or not so chatty) pre teens on Zoom engaged is possible. And it’s all about being relatable, authentic, and always leaning towards connecting with the students rather than teaching.

The biggest thing to remember is middle schoolers want authenticity and connection. You don’t have to know the answers to every question. Although we’d love for our students to walk away with more knowledge of the Bible, them walking away feeling seen, heard, and loved, even in pixels is most important. The end goal is always more about the connection with our students rather than the teaching to our students. Be present, create a safe space, and make it personal.