



Beginner's Guide to Holiday Bible Week

Introduction

Holiday Bible Week has been going for many years, and so has built up its own culture. We use certain stock phrases and assume everyone knows what we are talking about. This guide is an attempt to look at the HBW experience as a whole, and try to explain exactly how things work and what we expect of our helpers. However, every tent at HBW is unique, so there may be some differences between what is in this guide and what actually happens.

This guide covers registration, training and planning as well as looking in detail at what happens during the week itself.

Structure

Holiday Bible Week is a registered charity. There is a committee who are responsible for planning and running the event, and a set of trustees. HBW is affiliated to Churches Together Bishop's Stortford.

We expect well over 400 children to attend the week, and over 100 helpers.

During the week there are three main strands to HBW:

- The age group tents, where children spend most of their time
- The main tent, where everyone gets together for singing, teaching, games and puppets
- The site team, who look after the site including things like First Aid, toilets, litter ...

This guide is aimed primarily at those helping in the age tents. If you are helping in Main Tent, the Site Team or Hotline you should be given guidance on how these teams work.

Registration

All of our helpers need to register before they can help. This is done on-line at <http://www.holidaybibleweek.co.uk/>. We ask our helpers to sign up for at least 3 days, as it gets very difficult to organise tents if there are lots of changes in personnel during the week.

You will be able to indicate which age group you prefer to work with, assuming you are volunteering for the age group tents. It makes our life simpler if you can be flexible, but we will do our best to give you your preference.

We ask which church you attend, so we can contact them and get them to confirm that you are a suitable person to work at HBW.

When you register, you can also register your children. As a helper, your children are guaranteed a place. If you have children below school age, you can register them with the crèche.

DBS Checks

All staff are required to have a current DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check with HBW. If you do not have a current DBS, you will need to contact our Child Protection Officer who will explain what you need to

do. She will need to see proof of identity at some point - there are various opportunities to do this, but it must be done well in advance of the week, as the check must be completed and your certificate received before the event.

Training Evening

We usually run a Training Evening in June. Please attend this if you can. We will cover our Child Protection Policy (which everyone must sign every year), and introduce the theme for the year, with the stories and teaching points ('the grid') for each day. It is also the first opportunity to meet the people who will be serving in the same tent as you.

Your Tent

At or before the training evening, you will have been assigned to a tent. Think of this as being like a school class. Tents typically have 40-50 children, with a Tent Leader (or Leaders), and the appropriate number of helpers. We run on a ratio of 1 adult to 6 children (aged 5-7) or 1 adult to 8 children (aged 8-12). Usually your role will be 'Table Leader' or 'Table Helper', looking after 6-8 children. You will help them with worksheets and craft, encourage them in games and competitions, and be their main point of contact during the week. We will look at this in more detail later, but first ...

Planning Meetings

To run a tent successfully, the activities for the week need to be planned. Your tent leader will organise at least one planning meeting. Attend this if at all possible; it will help you to understand how the tent is going to work, and it will help your tent leader to know what you would like to do during the week, and to share out the various preparation tasks which will need to be done. Typically, the tent leader will be looking for ideas on crafts and activities which will support the story and teaching points each day, and for people to lead various parts of the day such as telling the story, running a quiz, teaching the memory verse, organising games etc.

If you cannot attend a planning meeting, do contact your Tent Leader before the actual event to talk through the plans and discuss what you would like to do during the week.

Setting Up

Most tents (the people) set up their tent (the canvas thing) on the Saturday or Sunday before the event. The tables and chairs need to be positioned, and the tent decorated on theme in a way appropriate to the age group. This is also a good opportunity to ensure that all the plans are on track, and that everything is ready for the first morning.

Dedication Service

There is a Dedication Service on the Sunday afternoon before the event. Do come along if you can, as we worship and pray together and dedicate ourselves to the week ahead.

Monday Morning

On the first morning in particular, come prepared and try to get there a bit early. As it's the first morning, it will take a bit longer than usual for things to settle down and to make sure everything is to hand. Don't forget to bring a packed lunch, and probably a mug for tea or coffee. Other things you might find useful include:

- Sharp scissors
- Hole punch
- Notebook and pen
- Sun hat / sun cream (we hope!)

Your tent leader may have other suggestions about things to bring.

Parking is available on site, and there is an area where bikes may be left. Pick up your badge from Reception – it will be in a folder with your tent name on the front. If you do not know where you should be, ask at Reception

Morning Worship

Every day we begin with a time of prayer and worship. The actual timing will be on the timetable for the week. Do come along to this session, as it really does help you to settle and focus on the day. Some people find these sessions among the best times at HBW. The timetable has been set so there is time for you to get back to your tent and do any last minute preparation before the children arrive.

The young helpers have their own session during this time. Other children remain your responsibility during this time, and are welcome to join us in the main tent for morning worship.

Crèche

If you have children below school age, they will be cared for in the crèche during the morning and afternoon tent sessions. Crèche is available from 9:45am. Crèche children should be signed up before HBW starts. The crèche children attend the Main Tent as a group, so they don't miss out on the singing and puppets. You will need to look after your own children during lunch.

Young Helpers

Young helpers (12-18) have their own session during Morning Worship. There are teaching sessions for the 12-14s each day, when they will be absent from their tents. The 15-18s have a late afternoon session one day, starting at 4pm after the children have gone. The 12s have a more structured programme, and only help in tents for part of the afternoon.

Morning Tent Time

The first part of the day is spent in the age-group tents. You will almost certainly be on a table with 6-8 children. Some tent leaders allocate children to tables before the event; others allocate them on the first morning. Each child should be given a name badge with their name and tent on it, and possibly which table they are on. Try to make sure that they wear their badges, and that they leave them behind at the end of the day.

There may be a settling in activity, such as a fun sheet, for the children to work on before the morning really starts. It takes a while for everyone to settle in on the first morning, but this does get easier as the week progresses.

The Tent Leader is responsible for taking a register, so we know who is here and who is not. In any case, you should make sure you know the children on your table, and that you know if any of them are missing at any point during the day.

The morning tent sessions are usually used for teaching. The way the teaching is presented differs widely from tent to tent – it may be a simple reading of the Bible story from a child-friendly version of the Bible, it may involve drama or other strategies to bring the story to life. You may be asked to lead one of these sessions, or to help in some way to deliver the story and the teaching for the day. Depending on the age of the children this may develop into discussion of the teaching points and looking at their relevance today.

Many tents find it useful to move the children from their tables onto the carpet at this time, as it provides a change in focus, and removes them from the many distractions on the tables so they can concentrate better.

The teaching is usually backed up with a craft or other activity. Various games and activities are used throughout the morning to maintain the children's interest. These often involve points being awarded to the table – this can act as an incentive, and the threat of loss of points may be used as a deterrent!

Fire Drill

It is unlikely that we will have a fire at HBW, but we do have a fire procedure, and there is usually a drill on the first day to ensure that everyone knows the procedure.

There will be an assembly point for each tent at a safe distance from the main part of the site. Make sure you know where this is. When the alarm (a loud horn) sounds, your tent should assemble and walk to the assembly point together. Older tents should be careful not to impede the younger tents during this time. A register will be taken at the assembly point. It is good practice to stay with your table during the fire drill, and to make sure you can account for the children on your table.

Stores

Your tent should be supplied with pencils, pens, scissors, card etc., and with any craft materials your tent leader has ordered. Further supplies are kept at Reception. This is where to come if you find you need extra material for a craft, or if you need something like paints, which are issued on an 'as needed' basis rather than being in the tent for the whole week.

First Aid

Reception is also where our first aiders are based. They will deal with any minor injuries or ailments, and will contact parents if we cannot sort things out on site.

Break

After the morning session there is a break (like playtime at school). The start and end of break is usually signalled by a bell. Children do not need direct supervision during this time, and may visit the tuck shop or their friends in other tents. However we do need to keep an open eye in case anything starts to get out of hand.

The queues at the tuck shop can be quite long, so we try to provide boxes with tuck items for sale in all tents.

Helpers do not need to remain in their tent during break, but can get tea or coffee, visit friends on site, use the time to prepare for the next session, or even join in the games!

Please note that children are not allowed in the refreshment tent, for reasons of safety.

Main Tent Time

After break, the children go back into their own tents for a few minutes before going over to the main tent. We don't take a formal after break register, but do check that all of the children on your table have returned. Your tent will be called over to the main tent by the site people – this is to make getting in and sitting down as efficient as possible. You will be guided to a sector of the main tent, where you should sit with the children. Only the oldest children have chairs in the main tent, the rest sit on the carpet. If you are able, sit with them, otherwise sit on a chair at the side or at the back. Try to avoid blocking the sight lines of the people behind you.

Main Tent time consists of singing, games, memory verses, puppet sketches and teaching relevant to the teaching points for the day. Main Tent normally do not use the Bible story directly, but rather develop the themes and teaching points.

It is good practice to sit near your children to encourage them to pay attention.

Lunch

Main tent ends with grace (chanted!), after which return to your tent for lunch. Like break, lunch is a low supervision time with children and adults free to mingle with other tents. Lunch is usually eaten outside of the tents unless it is raining, as food attracts wasps into tents, with obvious results. At the tent leader's discretion, children may go into the tent after they have eaten – particularly useful if they have craft or worksheets to complete.

Hotline

During lunch 'Hotline' is open. This is an opportunity for children (and adults) to discuss spiritual things and to pray about them. Hotline is run by a prayer team, who pray for us all throughout the day. Do feel free to take any prayer requests to them at any time.

Afternoon Tent Time

After lunch, children return to their tents for the afternoon session. A formal register is taken again – please be aware if any of your children who were there in the morning are absent in the afternoon. The afternoon session is similar to morning tent time, but is likely to focus less on direct teaching and more on games, craft and activities. Often there will be several activities happening at the same time, with children rotating between activities or choosing which activity to do. Generally there will be a brief summing up at the end of the session, to reinforce the main theme of the day. Children should be collected by a responsible adult, rather than leaving on their own. The Tent Leader should have been informed if this is not the person who usually collects them.

Workshops

The main tent team provide afternoon workshops, which are an opportunity to go a bit deeper with the children into some of the teaching points. These are generally for tents of a similar age, and are timetabled. Please go with your children to these sessions, both to support the main tent team, and to provide continuity for the children.

The dance workshop also operates on a timetable, but this is a voluntary workshop and not all children attend it. You may wish to accompany children from your tent when they attend this workshop.

Thursday Evening

Thursday evening is our open evening, when parents and supporters from the churches come to see what we have been doing for the week. Please attend if you can, so you can meet the parents of the children. The first part of the evening is usually spent looking round the tents, and after this there is a main tent session, including a message aimed at the parents.

Because of the open evening, try to get your tent looking its best beforehand. This is a good time for a general tidy up, as well as an opportunity to make sure that all the craft is on display. As there is limited time between the children going home and the start of the open evening, many people remain on site. We usually organise fish and chips for those remaining – details of this should be available earlier in the week.

Friday Afternoon

The week ends with a main tent session in Friday afternoon. This is usually a really good session with lots of noise and hopefully everyone leaving on a high.

However we do need to clear the tents on Friday afternoon. The children should take home their fun sheets and any craft items they have made – a supply of plastic bags is useful for this. The tables need to be taken down, the chairs stacked, the walls cleared of netting and the floor of rubbish, and supplies returned to stores. Please help out with this as much as you can.

Feedback

At the end of the week, please complete a feedback form so we can identify what went well and what we could do to make the event even better the following year!

Conclusion

And that's it! A document like this cannot really capture the fun, excitement and sheer joy of HBW. Thank you for helping, and please come again next year.