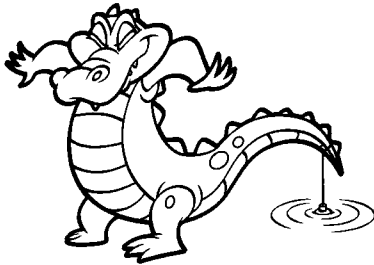
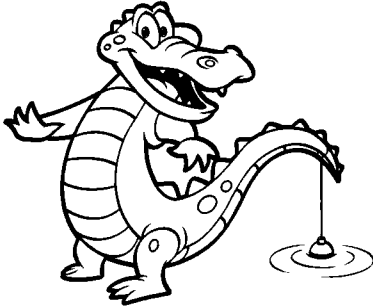




DEAR PARENTS:

We're so glad you've signed your child up for an exciting week at Crocodile Dock. You'll notice that things at Crocodile Dock are...well, a little different from what you might be used to. Elementary kids will be in mixed-age groups with other children who have finished kindergarten through grade 5. These small groups, called Bayou Crews, are led by adults or teenagers who love children and love the Lord. Bayou Crews are an important part of Crocodile Dock! Here's why.



Kids develop new friendships. While it's true that your child might not get to be with his or her very best friend, your child *will* have wonderful opportunities to make new friends and interact with a new group of children. Most of us assume that age-graded classes are the best way to go, simply because that has been our only experience. However, studies show that children learn as much—or more—when they're linked with kids of different ages. And studies indicate that children choose to play with children of other ages. In fact, one study observed that children naturally chose to play with other children their age only 6 percent of the time. They played with children who were at least one year older or younger than they were 55 percent of the time. Encourage your child to try something different—he or she might be surprised!

Older kids shine! Parents are continually surprised that after a few days of VBS, their older children *love* this newfound role! Suddenly, they're the "cool" big kids with younger children looking up to them. And while your child is helping younger kids with simple tasks like reading and writing, he or she is having the chance to serve and demonstrate Christ's love! It's a meaningful way to discover—and practice—the joy of service.

Younger kids are cared for. Crocodile Dock is carefully designed for groups of multi-age children. That means games are noncompetitive, team-building activities (brilliantly disguised as wildly fun games) in which your child's abilities will shine. In fact, many games are designed to *highlight* the importance of smaller kids. It's more likely that your younger child will be loved, affirmed, and doted upon by his or her older crew mates.

Bible lessons are more memorable. Since Crocodile Dock doesn't rely on more traditional teaching methods (like fill-in-the-blank puzzles or word searches), kids *experience* Bible stories in powerful, life-changing ways. And that's something kids of *all* ages will enjoy...and remember. Then Crew Leaders gather with kids for small-group discussion. These are questions that apply to every child but may touch each child at a different level. For example, on Day 2 as we learn that God is powerful, a Crew Leader might ask, "When have you needed God's power?" A younger child might respond, "During a scary storm," while an older child with more experience with life's challenges may say, "When my friends are all doing something I know is wrong."

Millions of children have experienced success with this multi-age approach. However, the most important factor in making this program a success is your attitude. If your child has doubts, reassure him or her that this is a wonderful opportunity to try something new. Your support will speak volumes to the children we're serving.

Crocodile Dock Director