

# IS THERE A WAY TO REACH EVERY ONE OF THESE LEARNERS?

Is there a way?

## Yes!

The process is called the natural learning cycle. This way of presenting God's truth is nothing new. Capable Sunday school teachers have done it instinctively for years. Research supports the idea that God designed a series of events to occur for information to go into long-term memory—that is, for learning to take place.


 *Monica likes to talk with her friends*

*about what's going on in her life; Craig wants*

*to know the facts and details as he works*



*through the Bible study;*

 *James is most interested in how a new idea works;*

*Julie wants to get out of the classroom*

*and put into action what she's just learned.*

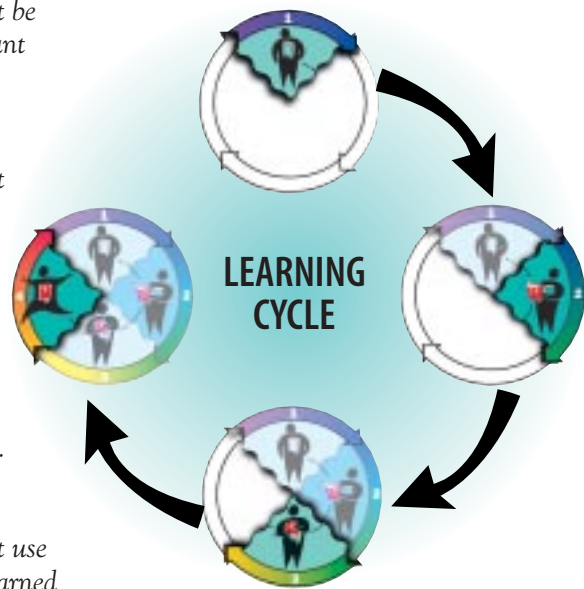


**STEP 1**  
*The learner must be **motivated** to want to learn.*

**STEP 2**  
*The learner must be **presented** with new information.*

**STEP 3**  
*The learner must **practice** the new learning.*

**STEP 4**  
*The learner must use what has been learned and **apply** it to life.*



For many Sunday school teachers, the natural learning cycle just seems to make sense. Experience has shown these teachers that students cannot absorb information they don't care to remember or practice a new concept they have not understood.

How does this look in the Bible lesson?

The following pages will amplify the learning cycle activities in each of these steps.

# STEP ONE



## All Children Need to Be Motivated

### THE PURPOSE OF STEP 1

is to link your children's life experiences (home, friends, preschool, etc.) to the Lesson Focus and to interest them in the topic.

**A**s the motivator, you are entrusted with the responsibility of engaging your children in such a way that they stay tuned in to find out what the lesson is about. To do this the children must have meaningful answers to questions like "Why do I need to know this?" and "What does this have to do with my life?"

To begin the lesson, you should have the children participate in an opening activity which involves the whole class in some way.

Activities could involve . . .

- a skit
- a game
- a puppet show
- a teaching aid poster
- an opening story

This activity is immediately followed up with a sharing time that allows the children to talk about their own experiences and what they know about the lesson topic. You see, children learn best when they see the

## How do you get them interested?

relevance of the new information you want to present to them. When they see how their own experiences connect to the Bible content presented in Step 2, the children will be more motivated to participate in the entire lesson.

The point of the initial activity and sharing time is to help the children discover the stake they have in the lesson, to understand why they should give you their time to learn something new, and to recognize that you value their participation.

### Meaningful Connections

God created the human brain to make meaningful connections between new content and what it already knows. When people are asked to remember something new, it is difficult (or impossible) to remember something that is perceived as useless. The human brain can only hold five to nine pieces of insignificant information at one time. Unless the children see the relevance of what you're going to present, the lesson won't "stick" in their minds or hearts for very long.



# STEP TWO



## All Children Need to Learn the Facts

### THE PURPOSE OF STEP 2

is to present the Bible information to your students.

In Step 2, the children will come face-to-face with information they may have never encountered before. This is the traditional step when most teachers feel they are “teaching.”

But you might ask, “Can’t I just begin here to teach the lesson?”

Unless you take the time to set up the lesson, motivate the children, and help them focus

‘Can’t I just begin here to teach the lesson?’

on how this content connects to their lives, you’ll lose their interest and they won’t grasp the Bible facts you’re presenting.

Bible content is delivered as an interactive Bible story.

You can use . . .

- actions
- puppets
- posters

- flannel figures
- and pop-up figures

to enhance your Bible story. As the children participate, they are using their ears, eyes, and sometimes fingers to absorb the information that you are presenting.

### Check for Understanding

Simply presenting information, however, does not guarantee that learning has taken place. As you know, just because you’re talking doesn’t mean the children are listening. That is why it is important that time be taken after new information has been presented to check for understanding.

This means that the teacher needs to take a few moments to find out if the children comprehended the information that was presented.

Teachers can check for understanding in a variety of ways. You can . . .

- have children retell or dramatize the Bible story.
- have children play a game or sing a song about the important facts.

- ask questions about the material like . . .

*Who was David’s friend?*

*How do friends in the Bible story show love?*

*Why do you think the people thanked and praised God?*

Step 2 of the lesson typically provides several questions to help you evaluate what the children have grasped.

It is very important to check for understanding before going on to the practice part of the lesson (Step 3). If the information has been misunderstood, the child who moves on in the lesson will either practice mistakes, or quickly get bored with the activities.

### The Power of Patience

Most teachers wait only .8 or four-fifths of a second after asking a question! When teachers wait three full seconds after asking a question, an amazing number of gains are seen in the number and depth of answers given by students.



# STEP THREE

## All Children Need to Practice



### THE PURPOSE OF STEP 3

is to provide a variety of opportunities to practice the information they've just acquired.

**S**tep 3 is the guided practice part of the lesson. In this step the teacher functions as a coach, setting up the plays, and then standing back and letting the children do all the activities. This is the time for children to try out the new information and see how it works.

This is a time for safe choices and exploration.

There are a number of ways to put new information to the test.

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Research supports the idea that the activity center works best. In this model, the teacher sets up several activity choices and allows each child to select the one which best matches his or her interest level and

learning style.

Create an environment that encourages your preschoolers to explore their options. Set up the activities in a variety of ways. Use both the table and floor space in your room.

However, before giving children

options for their practice time, all materials must be set up at each activity location. Take the time to carefully explain how each activity works.

Be patient as you conduct this step in your lesson. Most teachers find it takes as long as six weeks for children to learn the rules and procedures for using activity centers appropriately.

### Activity Tips

- If you have a **small room** with little space to set up three different activities, you may wish to select only one activity and do it as an entire class.
- If you have a **large group** of children, the more active options may need to be adjusted to fit your space. For example, instead of running in a tag game, you could have the students take tiny steps, or sit at a table and have them "run" with their fingers.
- When trying to **carve out** enough places for activity ideas, be creative in using all available space, such as hallways or the area under tables. If necessary, you can move chairs or desks against the walls to gain additional room.

- If there is **more than one Sunday school class of the same age level** in your church, perhaps you could team up with another teacher during Step 3. You could set up one activity while the other teacher sets up a different option. After the classes have completed one choice, trade rooms with the other teacher.
- If you have space to do all of the activities, you may wish to allow the children to freely explore the centers. Preschoolers learn by independently moving from activity to activity. You also move from activity to activity to check what the children are learning.



# STEP FOUR

## All Children Need to Use the Bible in Their Lives



### THE PURPOSE OF STEP 4

is to encourage children to show what they've learned in a personal, meaningful way.

**S**tep 4 is the time for the teacher to step back and assume the role of the encourager. This is the time for the children to show what they've learned.

*Step 4 has two distinct parts.*

1. The children make a plan about how they will show what they've learned.
2. The children implement their plans after they leave the classroom.

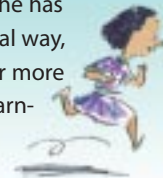
One of the hardest parts of Step 4 is to allow the children to make their own plans. It is appealing to "tell" them how to use the information in their lives. But in order for the children to "own" what they have learned, they must choose to use it, and use it in a way that is all their own.

The second part of this step is where the children put their plans into action! The creation of the plans occurs in the classroom in Step 4, but the acting out of those plans does not happen in the classroom. The application usually does not happen where you can see it. These plans are fulfilled in the

### Application Paralysis

Teachers have often spent so much time forging paths of application that children can become paralyzed during the Step 4 portion of the lesson. Children may be afraid to be "wrong" or simply have no idea about how to personally use what they have learned.

This calls for patience and understanding on the part of the teacher. It is critically important to understand that this step must "belong" to the child. If the child shows what he or she has learned in a personal way, then that child is far more likely to put that learning into action.



Children must  
use what they  
have learned in a  
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child's home, school, or neighborhood. In this way your lesson gets extended into the children's everyday lives where God's Word can make a significant impact.

### Digging Deeper into the Natural Learning Cycle

The natural learning cycle is a great pattern that every teacher can successfully use. Discipline problems diminish because students are involved. Students learn because they have been shown how the subject is relevant to them. Students are challenged to put what they are learning into practice. The natural learning cycle honors everyone God brings into our classroom.