

Creating Transition Videos for Children's Church

I have been doing children's church for a few years now and have discovered one of the biggest problems is down time between segments. Transitions between puppet skits and singing or drama and lesson times have the potential of letting kids do their own thing.

We decided a ways into doing children's church that for the time to work, to go smoothly we needed the entire time to be fluid. Each element needed to flow into the other. That way, there was no time for kids to get distracted, or do their own thing. But what to do?

We found that our kids had total concentration on videos we showed. There generally was little movement and no talking. Their total attention was towards that TV and they usually participated with whatever was going on in the video. They sang, stood up, clapped, and talked back. So, we thought, why not use short videos to create transitions between segments. Okay, I realize this is not a new idea, but it would be new for us.

We had a couple of video clips for starting a service and a couple for game times, but that was it. And those got old pretty quick. We needed, fun, upbeat transition videos that were custom to what we were doing and personalized to our kids and church.

I now use two websites and video editing software to create 20 second video transitions. I have a subscription to a web service called the Animation Factory (www.animationfactory.com). Their site contains hundreds of animations, graphics background and video backgrounds. The annual price is very minute when you realize all you can do with their products. These video clips can be downloaded in three different video formats: Windows Media, QuickTime and MPEG (which is what I use).

I preview the video backgrounds until I find one that will work and then I download the file to my computer. These are large files. Even zipped they are large. I unzip the file and drop it into a folder I have labeled "Video Backgrounds." Now, I have a folder full of raw video clips at my disposal.

The next step is to open my video editing software. Currently I'm using Video Wave from Roxio. I put a blank, black panel at the beginning and then drop the chosen video background in and then another blank, black panel at the end. This lets me fade in from and out to a black screen. It's just my preference. I generally like a soft, smooth start to my videos.

Next, adds some background music. Now all I have to do is add titles to the video that lets the kids know what is about to happen. For instance, it might say, "Get ready for Puppet Theater," or my favorite, "Grab your mamma, it's time for a drama!" These fade in and during the video. Lately, I have been added the title of the puppet skit, or story or Bible verse near the ends of the videos.

Remember, these are 20 seconds long. They are quick, but they keep the kids' attention while the next group moves into position. They are not only great for the kids, but also great for my children's church teams. It helps to let them know when to begin the next segment.