

Stuff to Know: Preparing to Serve with La Casa Grande

So you're coming to Santiago, Dominican Republic as a short-term missionary with Casa Grande? Great! We thought it might be helpful to take a few minutes and discuss our primary methods of sharing the gospel, what outreaches look like with the Casa Grande team, and how you can be ready! We'll talk like this is an ideal situation with loads of time to practice and brainstorm, fully understanding that life's busy and so are you. You'll see that's life around here, anyway! These suggestions and tips are to help you understand what we do, and to prepare your team accordingly—even if that's just informing them, "Be ready for anything!"

An Outreach with Casa Grande

Casa Grande has been ministering in Santiago for almost 20 years. We visit area churches and schools and do evangelistic services in the streets. We work through connections with local pastors, helping the local church grow by evangelizing the community surrounding it.



We start out by piquing the interest of the neighbors (and all the neighbor kids) with music, puppets, clowns, dramas, juggling, and/or any other variety of entertainment we (or you!) can come up with. Interspersing those entertaining elements with testimonies that point to Jesus as the only Way, we lead up to a gospel presentation and invitation, and we pray with people right there in the street.

It's a unique ministry, one that would never work in the USA. But this affords us a freedom that will kick start your confidence in sharing your faith.

So what's your role? You and your team will be the puppeteers, the clowns, and the actors in the dramas. You'll be the ones to share your testimonies and the ones who pray with people to be saved, or with hurting people who need healing. You ARE the ministers of the gospel!

Getting Your Act Together

So take a look at the bright shining faces on your team. Like, actually sit down together and look at each other. You'll want to start getting together regularly several months in advance, if possible, to have enough time to be confident in your dramas, skits, and songs. **If you're pressed for time, you can focus on dramas and testimonies**, but the more you're prepared to do, the better.

Now assess:

- What are each member's strengths and talents?
- Who has absolute creative genius?
- Does anyone already have ideas for dramas or dances?
- Does anyone have experience with the Spanish language?
- What resources does each member bring? (Props, costumes, flags and streamers?)
- Is anyone a preacher or teacher who could present a message?
- Does anyone juggle, do acrobatics, yo-yo tricks, magic tricks, jump rope, or physical humor?
- Is anyone artistic?
- Is anyone musically gifted? (Guitars travel well, and we have a keyboard we can take along.)

Absolutely all of these things, and lots more that didn't make the list, are useful for evangelism!

We need to have about **10-12 “acts”** prepared. We won’t do all of them at every event, but we need options! We can and do improvise when groups don’t get a chance to put everything together, but it’s so much better when the content comes from *you*. So this usually includes:

- 2 songs and maybe a skit for **puppets**
- 2 mini-acts for **clowns**, whether that’s humor, a skit, or a song they dance to
- Around 4 different testimonies (we use these between skits to help the timing for actors preparing for dramas, and will use the testimony of everyone on the team at least once). Kids can do this too!
- **3 dramas**, at least one of which has an impactful redemption theme (often a couple of the dramas have a humorous theme, but impactful message). **Please spend some time preparing these! The dramas are what really drives the point home and provides a platform for the invitation.**
- Another variety act, like juggling, a song, or other “action songs” or dances, etc.
- **Worship** can also be incorporated, if your team is musically inclined!
- A preaching or teaching **message**, if someone in your group wants to prepare something like this.
- A short (10 minute) **kids’ teaching** or message for Kids’ Club, or special activities for a kid-centered event. We often do children’s services, and there are always almost as many children as adults at our street ministry. Kids here have seen and lived through almost everything—no need to soften your message. But they also have extremely short attention spans and like colorful fun stuff!

Puppets

So let’s talk about puppets. We have a variety of puppets here at the base, so unless you have a specific routine that requires certain characters, you don’t need to worry about bringing them with you. The kids love puppets, so we’ll start out having puppets sing a song, then maybe do a skit or take a brief break, then sing one more song. Don’t be afraid to be overly dramatic and enthusiastic with these fuzzy people! Try practicing having the puppets take on different parts, come up and down at choreographed moments, or interact with each other, tackling or hugging.

Music: We’ve got our standard song bank for puppets, but we’d love new additions to the collection if you feel original. (See the **Music** section below for suggestions on how to find music in Spanish.) Kids’ church songs or worship songs work great, but make sure it’s got a lot of voices singing at once, or it will look strange to have a lot of puppets singing one solo! For the sake of your arms, which will be up over your head for the duration of the music, we recommend songs that are **less than 4 minutes long**.

See if there are any puppet skits online, even just brief little comedies with few words (for example, a Satan puppet gets squished or something physical), that would translate well.

Clowns

We have clown costumes we use at most outreaches. Be ready, because we’ll call on you! Lots of times our clowns dance and do motions to fun kids’ music. Or if you like clowning around, a little slapstick physical humor, pantomime, and interaction with the kids is always a blast. See what creative things you can come up with. New songs are also welcome for these colorful friends (see the **Music** section on this, too).



Dramas

Dramas are the outreach element that gets people thinking about their own relationship with God and with other people even while entertaining them. Dramas have story, and the most powerful ones demonstrate redemption.

It's great to have a couple more lighthearted ones, or ones that have a theme on healing or prayer—the "Sin Chair," for example, listed below. Wordless skits, with just sound effects, can also work great! But there needs to be at least one that rivets attention and focuses the "entertainment" back on Jesus, leading into the invitation.

If you're a creative person, write your own! We love original material, and we'll probably recreate it after you leave. Check out the **Music** section below!

Effective issues or topics you might include:

- Addiction
- Failed relationships
- Loneliness
- Drugs, alcohol
- Money
- Sports
- Religious attitudes
- Good works getting people to heaven
- Witchcraft



Or, if you'd rather recreate someone else's brilliant idea, do some reconnaissance on YouTube.

Here are some examples of super effective dramas—ones we ask you NOT to do, since we've already done them a lot. They'll give you an idea of where to start looking or creating.

- "Everything" (Lifehouse): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSwCOs-uXzU>
- "The Sin Chair": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Lokdp2dCqQ>
- "The King of Hearts": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETlfRwPhMI0>

Something like these could be cool! We haven't seen any of these yet.

- "Puppeteers": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObKf5u_c0Pg
- "Lead Me to the Cross": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atSs3YF5atM>
- "The Freedom Skit": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3dwroD9NT4>

If you use someone else's drama, feel free to modify it to suit your team. For instance, the "Freedom Skit" could be done with fewer people pretty easily. We usually have very limited space to perform, so it's usually best not to have more than 10 people involved in a skit.

You'll need to bring your own props, and you'll need to be able to make quick changes, so it's often easier to keep costumes simple and avoid face paint.

Make them big, overact your gestures and expressions, and just have fun with this!



Songs

Don't be afraid to try your hand at learning a worship song to sing in Spanish! Choose a song with simple words (preferably with an "official" translation, see the **Music** section below) and have fun! Or find an English song with very few words (Like "Allelu, allelu, allelu, alleluia, praise ye the Lord!") that you can get people to sing with you!

Music

We have a sound system (microphones, music hookups, etc.) we take with us to all outreaches, so everyone can hear. Don't worry about bringing anything like that with you. As far as music for dramas goes, we are able to play from digital sources (not CDs, sorry).

So... if you don't speak Spanish, how are you going to find good music for your dramas, puppets, clowns, etc.? Well, you've got a few options! And if you have questions, just ask us.

- There's the "lyrics don't matter anyway" approach—take the "Freedom Skit" example above—the song is "Locked in a Cage" by Skillet, but it's being performed at a Spanish-speaking event. If it's the feel of a song you're going for, not really the words, just using an English song can work. However, if any of the next three options work, that's preferable. Lyrics can emphasize the drama in a huge way, and if it's in Spanish we are showing that we value their language, too, not just ours.
- Use instrumental music (not for puppets, obviously!). Movie soundtracks are great, particularly ones with dramatic musical changes. We recently had a drama set to this song from *Pirates of the Caribbean*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOz3V-EcJkw>
- Look for your favorite songs in Spanish! Though not all translations are equal, many awesome ones do exist. Look for versions that have been done by popular groups that have a lot of views on YouTube. Most songs by Hillsong United have been translated excellently by Hillsong themselves. Check out this version of "Oceans."
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGAWXnvKUvY>
- Look for songs that inspire you from the following artists, then run them through www.translate.google.com to make sure the song is saying something you can work with.
 - Worship
 - Marcos Witt
 - Marcela Gandara
 - Marco Barrientos
 - Evan Craft
 - Christine D'Clario
 - Hillsong International
 - Hillsong United
 - Hillsong Young and Free
 - Danilo Montero
 - Barak (The Dominican version of Hillsong)
 - Julissa
 - Alex Campos
 - Christian Contemporary Music
 - Tercer Cielo
 - Redimi2
 - Funky
 - La Discipula
 - MamboRT

- Rojo
- Emmanuel y Linda
- Clown and Puppet Music
 - Xtreme Kids
 - Kids' Sunday school songs (Search "canciones para la escuela dominical")

Please don't play with the music tracks too much, speeding them up or slowing them down. Often this messes with understandability. Have them available in a couple digital formats so we can get them from your device onto ours.

Other Stuff

Don't be afraid to get creative! A dance, a flag routine, a magic act, a two-minute-painting trick, even something glow-in-the-dark could work! We've had jugglers and rope-jumpers. Any martial artists in your group? We can't wait to see what you come up with!

Testimonies and Working with Interpreters



Your testimony is the most powerful weapon in your arsenal when you get here to minister. Just explain in simple words either how you came to Christ, or how you've seen God make a difference in your life! Whether you're 9 or 69, you'll find that sharing your testimony actually changes *you*.

You do not have to speak Spanish to be effective. We have interpreters on hand to help with communication, and it's actually a pretty fun dynamic of our outreaches.

However, it's good to keep "translatability" in mind while you prepare. When you are giving a testimony or praying through an interpreter, remember to speak clearly and use short phrases (meaning more than a couple words at a time, but less than a full sentence at a time). You can look at the person or group you're talking to, and not at the interpreter, and that will help convey that you're the one speaking directly to them.

It's also best to avoid talking about subjects that will portray you as rich or prosperous—extended vacations and travel to many places, possessions, and other "first-world problems" are not relatable to the Dominican mindset and may actually drive a wedge between them and the gospel. Keep the focus on Jesus and what he's done for you!

Also, keep in mind that alliterative lessons, for example "The 4 R's of Justification" (Redemption, Reconciliation, Righteousness, and Renewal) will probably not translate into Spanish. It's better to avoid linguistic lessons like that and just keep it simple... and keep it short!

Your testimony may only be 5 minutes in English, but after it's translated it will take 10 minutes. It's best to keep testimonies under 5 minutes, including translation (so 2.5 minutes in English).

Gifts!

It's always fun to give gifts. Wondering what to bring along to give away? Small gifts often bring big smiles. But beware—if there's not enough for everybody, we can't give anything away. Many events have between 50-100 children, with as many as 400 at Kids' Club. Some successful gifts that don't have to break the bank include:

- Stickers
- Candy
- Flashlights
- Beanie Babies
- Button pins
- Pencils
- Bibles
- Bouncy balls
- Balloons
- Skim Ice popsicles (can be purchased here for about \$.12 each)
- Items from Oriental Trading Company or Christian Book Distributors