

THE ALPHA COURSE

Administrator's Handbook



THE ALPHA ADMINISTRATOR'S HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

The Alpha course is a practical introduction to the Christian faith and is open to anyone. It runs as a series of weekly meetings which each involve an informal meal, a talk and small group discussion. There are fifteen talks covering the basic principles of the Christian faith given over a ten-week period, including a weekend or day away. It is relaxed, non-threatening, low key, friendly and fun. Alpha is for everyone, especially those wanting to investigate Christianity, new Christians, newcomers to the church and those wanting to brush up on the basics. Alpha can work for groups of any size and empowers lay members of the church in effective evangelism. The syllabus and content of the course is contained in the book *Alpha - Questions of Life*.

The course works best when it is run two or three times a year, with each course ending in a celebration supper or drinks party that is also used as a way of introducing people to the next course. In this way, people who have attended the course are able to immediately involve their friends by inviting them to the following one.

Alpha has also had great impact in a variety of non-church settings such as prisons, schools, universities, workplaces, hospitals, residential homes, rural areas, inner cities, homeless projects, and even in tribal areas.

The Alpha course spans denominations and presents the core truths of the Christian faith in a manner that every denomination can get behind.

The Alpha Administrator's Handbook has been designed to take you through every stage of setting up and running an Alpha course on a step-by-step basis. Alpha courses come in many different shapes and sizes. With the size of courses currently ranging from 2 to 600 guests, the administration involved varies considerably. Undeniably there is work involved in running a course, but effective delegation, team planning and use of resources ensure that the process is manageable and fulfilling.

One thing that has been proven to be a fundamental part of running a successful course is to follow the recipe. Alpha is tried and tested. It has been running for over twenty years. Every aspect of the course is there for an important reason. This handbook is designed to enable you to maximize the impact of your hard work in running an Alpha course.

The **Alpha Administrator** is responsible for doing all the work behind the scenes for the course. The administrator should be well organised, outgoing and friendly.

THE ALPHA ADMINISTRATOR'S DUTIES IN BRIEF:

- Delegating tasks where possible to not be overloaded – appoint a task force
- Registering the Alpha course and being the key contact with the nearest Alpha Office
- Liaising with the Alpha Adviser or Resource Church
- Selecting the team
- Assigning hosts, helpers and guests to small groups
- Overseeing the organisation of the Alpha Guest Services, the Alpha Hosts' Training sessions, the Alpha sessions themselves and the Alpha Celebration Supper or Drinks Party

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FIRST STEPS

WHAT'S INVOLVED IN RUNNING AN ALPHA COURSE?

The course is based on ten evenings (or mornings/afternoons). A typical Alpha evening would be:

7.00 pm	Supper/light meal
7.35 pm	Welcome & notices
7.45 pm	Worship (if appropriate)
7.55 pm	Talk (live/DVD)
8.45 pm	Coffee & small groups
9.30 pm	Finish

There is also a day or weekend away that occurs half way through the course (usually between weeks 6 & 7).

You might want to launch the course with some sort of a taster event and / or end the course with a celebration supper party. (See page 36 for more details.)

It is vital to train the team before the course starts. (See page 15 for more details.)

BEFORE YOU START

Here are the first questions you might like to think about in preparing to run a course:

1. How are you going to get people on the course?

There is a guide to some of the ways of getting people onto a course on page 11.

2. How are you going to cater?

Each evening starts with food. If it is a daytime course then you may find that it is more appropriate to have coffee and cakes. It does not have to be flashy food, but people from all different backgrounds and cultures have testified to the difference that food makes to the course.

If you are looking for ideas on catering there is an Alpha cookbook available.

3. How are the talks going to be presented, live or by DVD (if live who will give them?)

Some people prefer live talks and some prefer DVDs. The DVDs are ideal to start with, since it allows you to concentrate on all of the other details of setting up and running the course. *The Alpha Course* DVD has a full-length 45 minute talk for each session as well as a 25 minute *Alpha Express* talk which can be used by those with less time. For speakers who wish to give their own talks live, transcripts are available from alphafriends.org. To order the DVDs, please go to alphashop.org or contact the **Alpha Publications Hotline** (0845 758 1278 or alpha@stl.org).

4. Who is going to be on the team?

The different roles involved in running a course are as follows:

i. Alpha Course Administrator.

ii. Alpha Course Leader

This is the person who introduces each week. It is ideally someone who will take some pastoral responsibility for people on the course.

iii. Task Force

This is the person or people who help with the behind the scenes activities, whether that is setting up the room, cooking the food, making the coffee or clearing away at the end of the evening.

iv. Group Hosts & Helpers (Hosts were previously known as group leaders).

These are the people who host the discussions after the talk and make friends with the guests on your course.

v. Worship Leader

You may like to include worship each evening. In general it is best to include worship if you are running a larger course, for 25 people or more.

One person can do all of these roles if necessary but the more the work is spread out the more enjoyable it will be for you!

INFORM CHURCH LEADERSHIP

For Alpha to be effective in your church, it is vital that the leadership of the church is supportive and committed to running the course. If you are not leading the congregation, ensure that you have the blessing and backing of the person who does.

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**HELP
AVAILABLE**

ALPHA RESOURCES

These guidelines refer to a number of resources that have been developed to assist you in running your Alpha course. To get hold of these please go to alphashop.org or contact the **Alpha Publications Hotline** (0845 758 1278 or alpha@stl.org) (or your nearest Alpha stockist) for the latest Alpha Publications brochure.

The Alpha website (alpha.org) has been designed for potential guests on the course. **Alphafriends.org** is your main source of information for events, guidelines, news, free downloadable resources, podcasts and much more. It also has information on Alpha courses running in different contexts, eg: Prisons, Forces, Workplace, etc.

Your nearest **Alpha Office** is available to answer any other questions that you have regarding the Alpha course. The addresses of the Alpha Offices around the UK and the world can be found in Alpha News or by visiting alphafriends.org. If your country does not have an Alpha Office, you can contact Alpha International in London on +44 845 644 7544 or alphaoffice@alpha.org.

ATTEND AN ALPHA CONFERENCE OR EQUIP AND REFRESH DAY

The Alpha conference or regional Equip and Refresh days are excellent preparation to run an Alpha course. They cover the principles and the practicalities of the Alpha course, what happens after Alpha, and include a 'Model Alpha Evening'.

If you are unable to attend a conference or Equip and Refresh day before you start your course, it would be helpful to read *Alpha – Questions of Life* and *How to Run the Alpha Course – Telling Others* (both by Nicky Gumbel), to familiarise yourself with both the content and the structure of the course.

For a list of forthcoming Alpha conferences, please visit alphafriends.org or see the latest edition of *Alpha News*.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL ALPHA ADVISER OR RESOURCE CHURCH

There is an established support network of volunteer Alpha Advisers and Resource Churches to help you to both set up and sustain your Alpha course. Each Adviser or Resource Church has experience of running Alpha and is there to provide practical advice and support. The contact details of your nearest Alpha Adviser or Resource Church can be found on alphafriends.org.

Your Alpha Adviser or Resource Church will not only provide you with answers to your general questions about the Alpha course, but may also be able to inform you of joint Alpha events taking place in the local area, such as joint prayer meetings, joint Alpha Hosts' Training, joint Alpha launch events and joint Alpha Weekends/Days. They can point you in the direction of speakers or venues for various events, and assist in promoting Alpha to your church leadership. More information on events near you can be found on alphafriends.org.

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PLANNING AND PREPARATION

SETTING THE DATES

As an organiser, the Alpha course is 13/14 weeks long, including the two training sessions before the course starts, and the Alpha Celebration Supper at the end.

Some courses hold an Introductory Launch Event or Alpha Supper at the beginning of your first course. This is a good way for people to invite their friends to do the first Alpha course. This format is exactly the same as an Alpha Celebration Supper Party in terms of content and planning (see page 58).

	DATE
Alpha Training 1 - Hosting Small Groups	_____
Alpha Training 2 - Pastoral Care	_____
Alpha Guest Service (Sunday)	_____
Introductory Alpha Event <small>(First course & autumn courses only. If you are running one course a year you also should have an Introductory Alpha Event.)</small>	_____
Alpha Week 1 - Who Is Jesus?	_____
Alpha Week 2 - Why Did Jesus Die?	_____
Alpha Week 3 - How Can We Have Faith?	_____
Alpha Week 4 - Why and How Do I Pray?	_____
Alpha Week 5 - Why and How Should I Read the Bible?	_____
Alpha Week 6 - How Does God Guide Us?	_____
Alpha Training 3 - Ministry	_____
Alpha Weekend/Day Away	_____
Alpha Week 7 - How Can I Resist Evil?	_____
Alpha Week 8 - Why and How Should I Tell Others?	_____
Alpha Week 9 - Does God Heal Today?	_____
Alpha Week 10 - What about the Church?	_____
Alpha Celebration Supper/Drinks Party	_____

REGISTER YOUR ALPHA COURSE

To register your course you can either:

- Go to **alphafriends.org** and click on 'Register your course'
- Contact your Alpha Office for a registration form

Your course listing will appear on the Alpha website. In addition, you will be informed of any new developments, events and other support available to you.

SELECT A VENUE

Select a site for the weekly sessions, based on the anticipated size of the course.

Setting - As a general rule, the more relaxed the setting, the better. The home is the best place to start and is generally more palatable for the non-churchgoer. Cafés and coffee shops are also proving to be popular venues. Depending on the size of your course, it may be necessary to move into church buildings. You can create a home like atmosphere using lighting, tablecloths, flowers, etc.

Small group space - If you have a number of small groups, make sure that your venue has enough places for the small groups to meet in private.

BOOK THE WEEKEND AWAY

Book a venue for your Alpha Weekend/Day Away as early as possible – up to a year in advance. See the Weekend section on page 29 for more information.

Obtain a written agreement from the venue, specifying everything you have discussed. Bear in mind a deposit may be payable before you have collected money from your guests. The venue, preferably away from the Alpha course venue, should be somewhere that is accessible, has a choice of activities and is somewhere where guests can relax.

Also look into the option of joining a joint weekend away with other churches. Contact your local Alpha Adviser for more information on this and look on **alphafriends.org**.

PUT IN PLACE AN ACCOUNTING SYSTEM FOR ALL INCOME AND EXPENSES OF THE COURSE

The financing of the Alpha course, and particularly of the Alpha Weekend/Day Away, should be a matter for prayer. Begin developing a budget for the:

- Introductory Alpha Event/Supper (before your first Alpha course)
- Weekly Alpha sessions
- Alpha Celebration Supper Party (following each Alpha course)
- Alpha Weekend/Day Away

Costs might include:

- Alpha invitations
- postage
- food
- Alpha course resources, eg: *The Alpha Course Manual*, *Why Jesus?*, *The Alpha Course* on DVD and Alpha Hosts' Training resources

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Meet with the church treasurer to learn about church policies concerning handling monies. Check on insurance coverage and make arrangements for coverage for all aspects of the course if needed. For larger courses you may wish to appoint a treasurer.

ORDER ALPHA RESOURCES, RECOMMENDED READING AND BIBLES

- *The Alpha Course Hosts' Training DVD* (previously known as *The Alpha Course Leaders' Training DVD*)
- *Alpha Course Hosts' Training Manuals* for your Alpha small group hosts and helpers
- *The Alpha Course* on DVD
- *The Alpha Course Manuals* for all the hosts, helpers and guests you anticipate attending your course
- Order enough copies of *Why Jesus?*, *Why Christmas?* or *Why Easter?* (depending on the season) to have available during the course, and for the end of both the Alpha Guest Service and the Alpha Celebration Supper

See [alphashop.org /Alpha](http://alphashop.org/Alpha) News for a current list of Alpha resources (UK orders only).

For those courses not using the Alpha DVD, the speaker will need a copy of *Alpha – Questions of Life* by Nicky Gumbel, which gives the content of the Alpha course. There is a CD-ROM available which contains the transcripts from *The Alpha Course* DVD for speakers to use as talk notes. To get hold of these please go to alphashop.org or contact the **Alpha Publications Hotline** (0845 758 1278 or alpha@stl.org) (or your nearest Alpha stockist) for the latest Alpha Publications brochure.

RECOMMENDED READING & BIBLES

The Alpha Course Manual includes a recommended reading for each week. If possible have the books available on site, as many guests desire further information immediately following the talks and small group discussions.

If you contact your local Christian bookshop they may be able to make arrangements to provide the recommended reading for you on a sale or return basis. This will allow you to take books from the shop to sell at your course venue, and you may return the books you have not sold.

Remember to stock Bibles, particularly on Week 5 when the talk is on the Bible. The New International Version is used on the Alpha talks (DVD).

DECIDE HOW YOU WILL ORGANISE THE WEEKLY SUPPER

The meal is a key element of the Alpha course, it is during the meal that friendships are formed and groups gel. Do not be daunted by the task – keep it simple, but do aim for the highest standard. Bear in mind what catering facilities you have available to you at the course venue.

Four ways of organising this meal:

1. Get a catering team of church members to provide the food for Alpha every week or on a Rota basis. Keep the budget to a minimum, and ask your guests to make a contribution to the cost of the meal by suggesting a small donation (£2-£3) in a bowl.
2. If you have a number of small groups each week, ask one group to make supper. This is often very good fun and is a very good way of getting to know your group. Again, put a bowl out for contributions for food.
3. If you have only one small group, each week one member of the group could provide the food. You might start by asking all the hosts and helpers and then, after Week 5, you could ask one of the guests who is likely to be happy to do it.
4. As your course grows you may need a caterer. The disadvantage of this is that it often raises the cost of the meal.

The Alpha Course Cookbook, available for free from alphashop.org or the **Alpha Publications Hotline**, contains possible recipes for Alpha meals for groups of 12, 30 or 100.

PLAN AHEAD – FUTURE COURSES...

Working towards eventually running a rolling programme two or three times a year, roughly following the academic terms has proven to be highly effective. This means that guests from the last Alpha course can invite their friends along to the next course (past Alpha guests are the best people to invite others along!), and ensures that the team is kept fresh, with new helpers joining it from the last Alpha course.

When setting dates you will need to work back from Christmas to Summer, from Summer to Easter, and from Easter to Christmas. Give yourself as long a break between the courses as time will allow.

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ATTRACTING PEOPLE TO YOUR COURSE

WIN SUPPORT FROM YOUR CONGREGATION

Most people attend the Alpha course because they have been invited by a friend. Your congregation is the best advertisement for the Alpha course. Informing the congregation about the Alpha course is vital for it to become an effective evangelistic tool in your church. Some suggestions as to how you might achieve this:

- Run the first Alpha course for the congregation, so that they feel comfortable inviting their non-church going friends to the next course
- Invite your Alpha Adviser or Resource Church Leader to give a presentation to your congregation about the Alpha course, or show the *Introduction to The Alpha Course DVD*
- Circulate copies of *Alpha News*, which are available in the UK from the **Alpha Publications Hotline** on **0845 758 1278**. *Alpha News* contains many stories of how Alpha is being used worldwide as well as news from Alpha International. In the UK you can order up to 100 free copies.
- Include Alpha testimonies in your church newsletter that your local Alpha Adviser can provide
- Encourage your congregation to invite their friends and family to the Introductory Alpha Event before your first course
- Encourage your congregation to invite their friends and family to the Alpha Guest Service before the course starts

PLAN YOUR ALPHA COURSE INVITATION

Alpha course invitations can be ordered from alphashop.org or the **Alpha Publications Hotline**. You can overprint them with the specific details of your church's Alpha course and slip in an insert with the specific dates and times of your Alpha course. Alternatively, you can make your own invitation. Make them as professional looking as possible, as they will be the first impression many guests have of the course. You can download the Alpha logo or the current Alpha invitation graphic from alphafriends.org. We cannot emphasise enough how valuable churches have found it to join in with the national Alpha Invitation each year, which means ensuring that your advertising matches the nationwide campaign.

Invitations should be available well in advance, so people can register before the course starts so that you can gain approximate figures for small groups and meals.

It is essential that Alpha invitations are readily available at the church information stand at all church services so that potential guests can sign up, and congregation members can invite their friends/family along to the next course.

You also might like to have these invitations available for:

- Alpha Guest Services
- Alpha Celebration Suppers
- Any enquirers or fringe members (eg: weddings, funerals, Christmas carols, baptisms)

INSERT A FLYER ABOUT ALPHA IN YOUR SERVICE SHEET

Explain that Alpha is a practical introduction to the Christian faith for all those interested in finding out more about it.

Mention that there will be an Alpha Guest Service to which people can bring their friends the following week. Encourage the congregation to pray about who they would like to invite, and to invite them.

ADVERTISE YOUR COURSE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

You can use Alpha posters, available from alphashop.org or the **Alpha Publications Hotline (0845 758 1278)**, to advertise your course. Although the majority of your guests will come along to the Alpha course as a result of a personal invitation, it is important that this is against a backdrop of Alpha advertising. If you can, put posters up on your church notice board and around your community, in your church newsletter and display an Alpha banner outside your church. It is helpful when your community becomes familiar with the fact that you run an Alpha course.

HOLD A GUEST SERVICE

Make the Sunday services evangelistically focussed on the Sunday before the course starts and encourage everyone to bring friends. (See page 21 for more details on this.)

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SELECTING THE TEAM

ALPHA SMALL GROUP HOSTS AND HELPERS

The ideal small group ratio is one host/helper to three guests with a maximum of twelve in a group, so you will need four hosts/helpers in each small group of twelve. The group host's role is to facilitate discussion, to draw conversation out of the small group, rather than 'teach' them. Remember to constantly remind your small group hosts that they are to facilitate discussion and not provide a 'Christian response' to the guests' points. The less the host needs to be involved in the discussion, the better!

Pray before putting the groups together, and to bear the following in mind:

- The age range you expect to have. If at all possible, try to keep hosts and helpers of similar ages in the same group
- The ratio of one host/helper to three guests in each small group of with a mix of male and females

The Alpha 'test' - When selecting your Alpha team you need to ask the question 'Would I trust my best non-Christian friend with this person?' If the answer is 'no' then they might not be the best choice to be an Alpha small group host or helper.

Helpers are often new Christians and may have just finished the Alpha course themselves. They are a key part of the small group as they are excited and lack church jargon which may confuse new guests. These helpers also play an important role in building friendships with guests and supporting the hosts.

Start by looking for group hosts and helpers in existing small groups (eg: cell or home groups) that you may already have running in the church as this will lead to a natural transition for guests from Alpha into the church. People who have previously led church groups need to attend the Alpha training to understand how Alpha group leadership is unique.

Encourage small group hosts and helpers to read *Alpha – Questions of Life* and *Searching Issues* (also by Nicky Gumbel) before the Alpha course starts. *Alpha – Questions of Life* is the Alpha course in book form. *Searching Issues* tackles the seven most common issues raised by guests on the Alpha course. It may therefore be wise if your Alpha group hosts and helpers are familiar with the material before running the course.

COMMITMENT

Being part of an Alpha group as a host or helper is one of the most rewarding things that you can be involved in. It is also a big commitment, and your team need to be aware of this before they agree to participate. Advise the team that they will be expected to commit to:

- 10 weeks of the Alpha course itself
- 3 team training sessions – 2 before the course and 1 before the Alpha Weekend/Day Away
- The Alpha Weekend/Day Away
- Possible social occasions with their group
- The Alpha Celebration Supper Party at the end of the course
- Keeping in contact with guests when the course is over
- Praying for each group member every day

If the team is not committed to the group then the guests are less likely to be committed to the Alpha course. It is therefore very important that the team understand the importance of their commitment.

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GATHER YOUR TASK FORCE

This is the group of people who you will ask to do all the practical work on an Alpha evening. The task force checklist on page 27 has a list of tasks they might do. Even if you are running a course in your own home, you will probably find it worthwhile having one or two people to help with the practical aspects of the course.

If you have quite a large task force you might like to put someone with a pastoral heart to lead them as a group. There is normally time during an Alpha evening to hold a small group session for the task force. This can be enormously encouraging to them. You may also like to hold a training session the week before Alpha starts, to cover all of the practical tasks and to encourage them in their role of serving.

ALLOCATE PEOPLE TO BE 'WELCOMERS' AND 'RUNNERS' FOR THE FIRST ALPHA EVENING

If you have a larger course it's a good idea to have a few smiley, chatty, friendly people available to welcome guests at the entrance, show them where to park, and to direct them to the venue. People should feel at home.

Depending on the size of your course, you may find that you need 'runners' on the first night of your Alpha course to take guests from the door to their small group. These runners can be small-group helpers. Runners should talk to the guests and make them feel at ease, but should try not to talk about Christianity as this may seem overwhelming to the guests.

WORSHIP ON AN ALPHA COURSE

The aim on Alpha is to model church and so it is great to be able to include worship. Often the people who find the worship most difficult at the start of the course can find it the more enjoyable part of the evening by the end. Sung worship is only recommended if your course is over 25 people. Delegate your worship leadership well in advance.

Some Alpha courses include worship from week 1. Other wait until weeks 3, 4 or 5. If you are planning on having worship at the Alpha Day/Weekend it is important to include worship on Alpha evenings beforehand.

If you don't have sung worship then at some point on the course it might be an idea to play a worship CD, even in the background, to allow guests to get used to hearing the songs.

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ALPHA HOSTS' TRAINING

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FOR SMALL GROUP HOSTS & HELPERS

(Previously known as Alpha Leaders' Training)

The Alpha Hosts' Training sessions ('Leading Small Groups', 'Pastoral Care' and 'Ministry on Alpha') should be held before every Alpha course, and all team members should attend these sessions. Leading an Alpha small group is often very different from other Christian groups that meet, and this training is designed to give guidelines on how to conduct an Alpha small group. This has a significant impact not only in unifying the team, but in ensuring that the small groups, the pastoral care and the ministry run smoothly. Encourage those who have led groups and attended the training before to come along to share their experience with the newer hosts and helpers. It would be good to encourage the team to pray in their small groups before they go home.

If a member of the team is unable to attend any of the training sessions, they should borrow the DVD.

Please refer back to page 10 - 'Setting the dates' - for the recommended timing of the three training sessions.

7.00 pm	Supper
7.35 pm	Notices and welcome
7.45 pm	Worship
7.55 pm	Talk - 'Leading Small Groups', 'Pastoral Care' or 'Ministry on Alpha'
9.00 pm	Questions & prayer
9.30 pm	Finish

Do use this meeting as an opportunity to encourage the group leaders and helpers to bring friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues to the course.

Ensure that all relevant contact details are circulated at this meeting

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HOLD THE ALPHA
GUEST
SERVICE

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ON THE SUNDAY BEFORE ALPHA STARTS

The Alpha Guest Service is one of the most significant ways of encouraging people to attend your Alpha course. It should be broadly similar to your usual service, with the following differences:

- The service is particularly focused on the guests your congregation have brought along
- During the service there is a brief explanation of what the Alpha course is and when the next course will be running. Before the sermon you might like to ask one or two people who have just completed a course to give their testimonies in an interview style, or ask your Alpha Adviser if they can recommend someone to do this. The aim of this is to encourage them to talk about Jesus, not the Alpha course. You could ask them two or three of the following questions:
 - Were you a churchgoer before you did the Alpha course?
 - How did you find out about the Alpha course?
 - What was the Alpha course like?
 - Tell us what happened to you on the course?
 - What difference has Jesus made to your life?
 - What would you say to someone who has not yet done the Alpha course?
- The sermon should present the gospel clearly (see Chapter 6 of *How to Run the Alpha Course – Telling Others* by Nicky Gumbel).

You will need to:

- Give out Alpha course invitations with your service sheets
- Be available to answer questions at the end of the guest service
- Have free copies of *Why Jesus?* available to distribute at the end of the service for any guests

MAKE A FINAL ESTIMATE FOR THE NUMBER OF EXPECTED GUESTS FOR CATERING

Bear in mind that some people who have not registered for the course may turn up on the first night, and that some who have registered will not turn up.

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

	CHECKLIST	WHEN	DONE
1	Support of church leadership		
2	Attend an Alpha conference or Equip and Refresh Day		
3	Contact your local Alpha Adviser or Resource Church		
4	Appoint an Alpha Administrator & Alpha Course Leader		
5	Register your Alpha course		
6	Set the dates of your Alpha course		
7	Find a venue for the weekly sessions		
8	Book a venue for your Alpha Weekend/Day Away		
9	Decide how you will present the Alpha talks		
10	Win the support of your congregation		
11	Develop a system of accounting for all income and expenses for the course		
12	Appoint a worship leader		
13	Prepare Alpha course invitations		
14	Order Alpha resources and recommended reading		
15	Obtain a copy of <i>The Light of the World</i>		
16	Advertise your course inside and outside the church		
17	Prepare invitations for your Alpha Guest Service		
18	Invite your small group hosts and helpers		
19	Invite your task force		
20	Arrange for someone to run the bookstall		
21	Decide how you plan to organise the weekly supper		
22	Advertise Guest Service		

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**THE ALPHA
COURSE**

A TYPICAL EVENING ALPHA

Alpha courses run in a wide variety of locations, and at different times of the day. Many courses run on a particular weekday evening over a ten week period.

As a guide, an evening Alpha course would roughly follow the following timetable (please do adapt it to your local needs):

- 6.15 pm** Prayer/Administration meeting for hosts and helpers
(wk 1, then
6.30 pm) - Prayer meeting (20 minutes)
- Administration notices (given by Administrator - 5 minutes)
- Team training (given by Course Leader - 5 minutes)
- 7.00 pm** Supper/light meal
- 7.35 pm** Welcome
- Notices – only include notices related to Alpha
- Mention recommended reading
- Joke (optional)
- Introduce the speaker (if applicable)
- 7.45 pm** Worship – see alphafriends.org for tips & suggested songs.
- 7.55 pm** Talk (live/DVD)
- 8.45 pm** Coffee
- At the end of the talk, the guests break for coffee – usually in their small groups.
- 9.00 pm** Small groups
- Guests have spoken of how they found the small group sessions to be the most valuable and rewarding times of the whole Alpha course. The sessions are an opportunity for guests to ask questions, express opinions, and to discuss the topic of the evening. Small groups also provide an opportunity to make friends, and to bounce ideas around in a relaxed and non-threatening environment.
- 9.30 pm** Finish

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A TYPICAL DAYTIME ALPHA

GENERAL INFORMATION

CHILDCARE

Many daytime Alpha courses are attended by young mothers, and it may therefore be wise to provide a crèche for the children of your guests.

SUGGESTED TIMETABLE

9.30 am	Prayer and administration meeting
10.00 am	Coffee and light food
10.30 am	Notices
10.35 am	Worship
10.45 am	Talk
11.30 am	Small groups
12.15 pm	Finish

SETTING THE DATES

When setting the dates for your daytime Alpha course, you may want to take the school half-term into account.

PRAYER/ADMINISTRATION MEETING

This meeting is for all small group hosts and helpers and should be held before Alpha. Each week there may be different bits of admin that the groups will need to do, there are some suggestions included in the weekly checklists below.

It is really important that the team is united, and you will find that the relationships within the team act as an amazing witness to the guests on the course. It cannot be emphasised enough how important it is to make weekly prayer a main feature in the plans.

THE WELCOME

When people arrive they are often tired and distracted. Be clear that the ethos of the evening in particular is to make people feel at home and welcome.

The welcome slot could include:

- A brief summary of the previous week/s - it can be helpful to remind the guests (and new guests arriving) of where you are within the course
- Recommended reading and Alpha live (htb.org.uk) - it is good to put the course in a wider context, by advertising books that are unrelated to Alpha. This highlights the fact that when they come to Alpha, they are also coming to the historic and worldwide Christian church
- Notices: avoid all church related notices, as they may shift the guests' focus away from Alpha, and dampen the evening. This slot can be very useful for encouraging guests to attend both the Weekend and the Celebration Supper

- **Humour/a joke – If possible, try to include a joke. Laughter helps the guests relax after a stressful day, and immediately captures their attention**

WEEKLY TASK FORCE CHECKLIST

Each week there are a number of things that need to be done to ensure the smooth running of the Alpha evening:

	DONE
Put up other relevant signs around the venue (toilets, etc)	
Make sure there are enough Bibles and <i>Alpha Course Manuals</i> available for each group	
Make sure the room temperature is comfortable with warm lighting	
Direct guests to park their cars	
If using a DVD, set up the DVD player and monitor	
For live speakers, make sure the microphone and stand are in place and tested for the speaker	
Set up the bookstall and make sure the recommended books for that session are available	
Place baskets on each serving table to collect money to cover the weekly suppers. If you are suggesting a specific contribution (eg, £3), make a small sign to that effect	
Help prepare and serve food and drink during the supper and coffee break	
Be available to convert the supper area into small group meeting areas if necessary	
Clear up the main venue and the small group meeting areas at the end of the session	

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WEEK 1 – WHO IS JESUS?

The first session is a key evening, and making the best possible first impression ensures that people will come back for the second night. Do however be aware that there will always be unforeseen circumstances.

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION:

1. Prepare lists for the registration team

For larger courses an alphabetical list of pre-registered guests and their assigned groups and a breakdown of the small groups listing the average age and how many men and women has proved very useful in allocating unregistered guests who turn up on the night to a small group.

Remember that some pre-registered guests may not attend, but others, who have not pre-registered, may arrive on the night.

2. Name badges

Name badges are useful for the first three weeks whilst everyone gets to know each other. Simply use sheets of stickers with a marker pen.

3. Supply *Alpha Course Manuals* to all the guests, hosts and helpers

Give these manuals to the guests (see the Alpha Copyright Statement explained, page 64).

PRAYER/ADMINISTRATION MEETING

FIRST NIGHT WELCOMING TIPS

- Remember that the first night is the most important and the most difficult. It becomes easier to lead as the weeks go on and people become friends. On previous Alpha courses the first evening has proved to be the toughest night to lead, as guests can be deeply suspicious. It does get easier as the weeks progress.

However, leading the first night of Alpha can be quite daunting

- Try and get on first name terms as quickly as possible – have the name badges ready
- Spread out and not sit together – particularly small group hosts and helpers
- Ensure that the guests have a good view of the speaker during the talk
- Accompany people when they collect supper
- Smile!

NOTICES

- Review the location of the small groups, their size and the arrangements for getting coffee
- Stand up when people enter their group, and move towards them to greet them and make introductions
- Remember the following in their small groups:
- Name Game, Desert Island Game - how did you come to be here?
- Discussion questions. 'If there is a God and you could ask one question and be sure of getting an answer, what would you ask?' 'What do you think or feel about the content/issues raised in tonight's talk?'
- Get to supper early – people tend to arrive early on week 1

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**WEEK 2
– WHY DID
JESUS
DIE?**

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

Prepare name labels and group lists, including contact details of each group member, for all small group hosts and helpers.

PRAYER/ADMINISTRATION MEETING

NOTICES

Hosts and helpers should be advised to:

- Expect some new guests tonight that will be put into groups that were low in numbers the previous week, and some new groups may start
- Have their group members check the address list and add their email addresses
- Mention the Alpha weekend away to their group

TEAM TRAINING

Instruct the team to:

- Keep an eye out for new guests, and remember to introduce the new people in their small groups
- Small group discussions – A reminder: For the first three weeks the discussion could go in any direction and the likelihood is that hot topics such as suffering and religion will arise. Group hosts and helpers should not have any agenda as to how the discussions should run, and should not ask any loaded questions. Guests' views should be affirmed and opinions should be validated. To get discussions running, a good opening question is 'What did you think of the content of the talk?' The booklets from *Searching Issues* can be useful when faced with challenging topics
- Give out the dates and cost for the weekend to members of their group

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WEEK 3
- HOW CAN WE HAVE
FAITH?

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

- Make the Weekend/Day Away form available– see supplement. Ensure you let the small group hosts know that no one should be prevented from coming on an Alpha Weekend/Day Away for financial reasons. Make bursaries available to those who cannot afford it, and recoup the money during the collection on the Alpha Weekend/Day Away. Continue to distribute this form to team members until you go on the Alpha Weekend/Day Away

Provide a money envelope for group hosts to collect payment for the weekend. Mark on it to whom cheques should be made payable, and continue to distribute the envelopes to team members until you go on the Alpha Weekend/Day Away

- **Start planning the Alpha Weekend/Day Away** – see page 50

PRAYER/ADMINISTRATION MEETING

NOTICES

Hosts and helpers should be instructed to:

- Be aware that this is the last week for name badges
- Pass on the dates and the cost of the weekend to their group members
- Let guests know the childcare provisions for the weekend
- Remember the date of the third training session

TEAM TRAINING

The team should be instructed to:

- Keep an eye out for any new guests
- Draw any vocal Christians in your group aside and tactfully ask them to be quieter during the discussion, to help draw out the other non-Christian guests. This could be done during the meal
- Be flexible on the direction of the group discussion
- Consider beginning the small group discussion with: 'What do people feel about the idea of having a relationship with God?'
- Begin chatting to people over supper to see who might be able to attend the weekend. Start with the keenest person, as this fills others with confidence that they will not be the only ones attending
- Let guests know the cost of the weekend, and that bursaries will be available

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**WEEK 4
- WHY AND
HOW SHOULD I
PRAY?**

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

- Prepare Weekend/Day Away form and money envelope

PRAYER/ADMINISTRATION MEETING

NOTICES

Hosts and helpers should be advised to:

- Continue taking registrations for the weekend, and add any additional names to their list of attendees
- Promote the weekend/day, and encourage attendance and payment tonight
- Explain the weekend/day transport arrangements to guests in their group
- Attend the ministry training sessions, on [give date]

TEAM TRAINING

The team should be instructed to:

- Pay their costs for the weekend as soon as possible
- Bear in mind that the talk this evening is on prayer, and to pitch the questions low. Two questions that could be asked are:
 - Has anybody here ever tried praying?
 - How did you get on?

Draw out stories from guests who consider they are atheists, of times that they tried to pray. Hearing how people who are not Christians pray can be fascinating for guests

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**WEEK 5 – WHY
AND HOW SHOULD I
READ THE
BIBLE?**

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

- Prepare Alpha Celebration Supper Party Invitations. On Week 7 of the course you will need to start distributing invitations to the Alpha Celebration Supper that takes place at the end of the course. Ideally, you should start designing and preparing your invitations now.
- Ensure the bookstall has plenty of Bibles for sale
- Weekend/Day Away form and money envelope

PRAYER/ADMINISTRATION MEETING

Feedback

Ask for feedback from the groups on how the course is going.

NOTICES

Hosts and helpers should be advised to:

- Start confirming numbers for the weekend/day and asking guests to pay
- Collect names of people attending the weekend/day
- Explain methods of payment available to guests – cheques, cash or credit cards (if available)
- Give transport details to the guests
- Remember to attend the ministry training sessions

TEAM TRAINING

The team should be advised to:

- Encourage guests to attend, and pay for, the weekend/day away. It is important to know numbers at this stage. The best way to do this is for the group hosts to lead by example and to pull out a cheque book and fill in the payment slip in front of the group
- Remember that this evening's talk is on the Bible, and therefore to pitch the discussion questions low. If they are pitched too high there may not be a response. After the talk, the temptation is to get very enthusiastic and ask something like 'Have any of you found it really exciting when God speaks to you through the Bible?' This will most likely be met with complete silence!
- Consider asking the following questions:
 - Has anyone ever tried reading the Bible?
 - Did you find it really boring?

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WEEK 6
- HOW DOES GOD
GUIDE US?

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

Prepare handouts for the Alpha Weekend/Day Away and money envelope.

PRAYER/ADMINISTRATION MEETING

NOTICES

Hosts and helpers should be instructed to:

- Collect final payment from everybody attending the weekend/day
- Mention arrangements for special diets, and collect relevant numbers
- Announce transport details
- Take a copy of the group address list, in case they need to contact latecomers

TEAM TRAINING

The team should be advised to:

- Avoid asking the question: 'Has anyone ever sensed God guiding them?' There may be some difficult responses to this. If they ask the question 'Has anyone had a sense in the last few weeks that God has been guiding them?' they are more likely to get a useful response
- Remember to discuss tongues in the small group on the Saturday morning of the weekend/day away (1 Corinthians 12). This could be introduced as 'Has anyone had any experience of speaking in tongues?' It is helpful later in the day if the topic has already been introduced. Make sure you mention that they don't need to speak in tongues. There aren't first or second class Christians!
- Begin to offer to pray for group members immediately after the speaker concludes at the 5 pm ministry slot on the weekend/day

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**WEEK 7 – HOW CAN I
RESIST EVIL?**

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

- Distribute Alpha Celebration Supper Invitations around the small groups. Group hosts should encourage the guests and helpers in their group to think about who they would like to invite to the Alpha Celebration Supper. Let the small group hosts know how much it will cost per head
- Finalise a menu for the Alpha Celebration Supper – See page 58 for further details. Aim to make the meal a special and memorable evening for guests!

PRAYER/ADMINISTRATION MEETING

FEEDBACK

Get feedback from the weekend.

NOTICES

Hosts and helpers should be instructed to give out the dates of the Alpha Celebration Supper. Encourage the group to attend, and to bring friends and family. Advertising for the supper builds from week 7 to week 10.

TEAM TRAINING

The team should be instructed to:

- Begin the discussion by hearing feedback from the weekend, and start with someone they know has had a positive experience. Listen to guests who may have had a negative experience, but it is ideal to start and finish with an encouraging story from the weekend
- Naturally lead any conversation arising from the talk 'How Can I Resist Evil?' onto a discussion about prayer

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WEEK 8 – WHY AND HOW SHOULD I TELL OTHERS?

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

- Prepare the following handouts: Hosts' Questionnaires, Alpha Celebration Supper money envelope, Supper Form

PRAYER/ADMINISTRATION MEETING

NOTICES

Hosts and helpers should be instructed to:

- Give reminders of the date(s) of the Alpha Celebration Supper, and mark on their forms in their packs how many group members will be attending
- Distribute supper invites to guests. In the admin packs there are envelopes to collect money for the supper, and the cost to guests is [£X] a head

TEAM TRAINING

The team should be instructed to:

- Obtain numbers for the suppers by the end of this evening
- Begin this week's discussion with the question: 'Has anyone told anybody that they're doing the Alpha course?' That can then be followed up with: 'How did that person react?'
- Start to think about praying together towards the end of the small group time. Ideally all of the group should pray tonight – silent prayers are fine

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WEEK 9
- DOES GOD HEAL
TODAY?

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

- Alpha Celebration Supper form and money envelope
- Guest questionnaires, essential to improving your next course, assisting those who will run a course after you and can also help with finding guests to interview at the Alpha Supper

PRAYER / ADMINISTRATION MEETING

NOTICES

Hosts and helpers should be advised to:

- Remind guests of the date of the Alpha Celebration Supper. The following must be obtained:
 - Numbers attending
 - Money
 - Helpers for the evening
- Use the envelope in the admin pack to collect money for the supper
- Ensure that guests fill out their questionnaires
- Group hosts should flag up anyone in their group who would be a good candidate to give their testimony. There is no need to make the guest aware of this. When deciding what makes a good testimony, hosts can ask themselves - if you were bringing a friend to the supper, would you want them to hear this person? The person doesn't need to have become a Christian on Alpha
- Think about their guests' options for the following term. They may wish to come

back to help on the next Alpha course, or join a pastorate/home group. All team members should be made aware of these opportunities. It is important that any guest who completes the course continues to be pastored and becomes fully integrated into the church. Existing church structures can be used to determine how to go about providing a follow-up programme

TEAM TRAINING

The team should be instructed to:

- Obtain final numbers for the Alpha Celebration Supper
- If applicable, remember to bring a bottle of wine to the Supper
- Bring as many guests as they like without paying, or contribute if able
- Begin the group discussion by talking about the supper, but pray as soon as possible. It is important to avoid getting bogged down in a theological discussion - activities should be kept on a practical level this week
- Ensure adequate time is left for the praying
- Look for those who want to receive prayer, and also those who wish to pray for others. The desire for prayer may be visible in someone's face. Some guests may wish to pray for a good friend they have made during the course. Hosts and helpers should keep an eye out for this, and be encouraging

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WEEK 10
- WHAT ABOUT THE
CHURCH?

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

Prepare the following handouts: Hosts and Guest questionnaire, Celebration Supper Invitations, Alpha Celebration Supper form and money envelope.

FOLLOW UP AFTER WEEK TEN

- After the session, obtain final numbers for the Alpha Celebration Supper
- Write thank you letters to the small group hosts, helpers, and the task force team to thank them for all their hard work.

PRAYER / ADMINISTRATION MEETING

NOTICES

Hosts and helpers should be advised to:

- Volunteer to help with the Alpha Celebration Supper, if possible
- Return all hosts' questionnaires to the Alpha Administrator
- Feel free to photocopy guest address lists and hand out to the group, permission permitting
- Remember to organise a social event for the group, to take place after the course has finished

TEAM TRAINING

The team should be instructed to:

- Obtain final numbers for the supper, and encourage guests who have not yet paid
- Fix a date for a group reunion
- Think about potential helpers for the next course. Particularly consider guests who were non-Christians at the start of the course, even if they are not yet Christians
- Consider asking the following questions this evening:
 - How have you got on during the course? (Pick an open and positive person.)
 - What would you like to do now? (Join a pastorate/home group? Be involved in the next Alpha course? The host needs to make suggestions.)
 - Is there anything anyone would like to pray about? (If there are no prayer requests, then close in giving thanks - otherwise, end in prayer.)

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**THE ALPHA
WEEKEND/DAY AWAY**

INTRODUCING THE WEEKEND AWAY/AWAY DAY

It is important to have planned your Alpha Weekend/Day Away before your Alpha course starts, and to start advertising it to your guests soon after the course starts. Start as early as Week 2. At this early stage we simply mention dates, and emphasise what an important part of the course it is.

You can mention the Weekend/Day Away more in Week 3, and forms can be handed out from this point. During the fourth session, you should mention that there are bursaries available. Experience has shown that the Weekend/Day Away is a time when lots of friendships gel in the small groups.

On Week 5, you should continue to talk about the weekend.

Important elements of the trip which should be emphasised to the guests are:

- Transport
- Beautiful location
- Important subject matter

This ensures a continual sense of build up to the Weekend or Day Away. To help persuade the guests to attend the weekend, it can be helpful for the small group hosts to first approach the most enthusiastic person in the group, and ask if they will be coming. Once they confirm they will attend you will find that others tend to follow.

By Week 6, talk of the weekend should now be reduced, as at this stage there are only three days to go. Guests can be given brief encouragement to attend though over selling the event at this stage could seem a bit desperate!

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**PLANNING
YOUR AWAY DAY/
WEEKEND**

ALPHA WEEKEND VS. ALPHA DAY

The first decision you need to make is whether or not you plan to hold an Alpha Weekend or an Alpha Day. It is possible to cover the material in a single day, and Alpha Days are a wonderful blessing to those that attend them. However, the weekend away has the advantage of providing a relaxed environment for a prolonged period of time. People travel together, take walks together, and generally spend relaxing time in each other's company. It is a great way of breaking down barriers, and facilitating some real opportunities for both bonding and spiritual growth.

You will need to decide what you are able to do with the resources you have. One option may be to join with local churches.

THE VENUE

Book your venue as far in advance as possible. The better venues are always booked up early. Make sure that the venue has facilities for people to relax, eg: is in the countryside, is by the sea or has sports facilities, etc.

It is always a good idea to team up with other churches in your area and to organise a weekend/day together. Not only can this ease the administrative burden on a single church, but it may be more cost effective and it is always more fun!

You may already know of a suitable venue for your Alpha Weekend/Day Away. However, if you need some advice do consult:

- Your local Alpha Adviser or Resource Church

If you are running a course in the UK you can also use:

- The UK Christian Handbook
- CCI Venue finding site (www.cci.org.uk or 01908 641641) - this is an organisation set up to find Christian retreat venues for groups. (Sadly, they cannot help for venues for the Alpha Day Away.)

THE COST

Try to keep the cost of the weekend as low as possible. Never let money be an issue which prevents someone from attending the Alpha Weekend/Day Away.

Some will not be able to pay but others will be able to pay more. Ask people to contribute what they can afford – for example, what they would spend in their home town over a weekend.

On the Sunday morning of the weekend you may want to take a collection, letting them know what the financial short-fall is. Churches have found that God often honours this principle.

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SATURDAY AFTERNOON

On Saturday afternoon you might like to organise a walk or a football match for guests and helpers. Bear this in mind when selecting a venue for your Alpha Weekend/Day Away, and make full use of any facilities available to you. Arrange for someone to organise sports or other events during the free time.

SATURDAY NIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

After the talk on the Saturday evening of the Alpha Weekend it is good to give guests an opportunity to relax.

If you have a small number on your weekend you might like to play a game (eg, Pictionary) which can be played by any age group.

If you have larger numbers on your Alpha Weekend you might prefer to have a cabaret-style entertainment evening. The aim of this is to have 'good clean fun' and you may find some very talented people on your course!

Ask someone to be in charge of co-ordinating the entertainment and give them a photocopy of the list of organiser's instructions (Appendix 4). They may be able to act as host for the evening and introduce each act.

FAMILIES

As churches we want to encourage family life. Invite family members of those on the course to come on the Alpha Weekend. They do not have to come to talks and are welcome to join in the entertainments and meals.

You will probably have to consider having children's workers available for the weekend. Remember to ensure that any legal requirements regarding childcare are met. Select someone to organise the childcare for the weekend.

SPEAKERS

If you would like someone to lead your Alpha Weekend/Day Away, do contact your local Alpha Adviser or Resource Church (alphafriends.org and in Alpha News). They may be able to suggest a guest speaker, or be able to invite you along to an Open Alpha Weekend/Day.

TIMING

The ideal time for the Alpha Weekend/Day Away is between Weeks 6 and 7 of the course. It should always fall between Week 5 and Week 8. It is always preferable to have the talk 'How Can I Resist Evil?' following the Alpha Weekend. If necessary, switch around the talks on Evil and Guidance.

You can begin to circulate forms for people to sign up for the weekend from Week 3 – the earlier it is written in people's diaries, the better.

VENUE LIAISON

It is important to liaise with the venue about:

- Sheets, towels, soap
- Communion wine (establish who will provide it)
- Sound & recording equipment, overhead projector
- Bookshop - check that they are happy for you to take your own stock
- Special diets / disability access
- Sports facilities
- Cots and early meals for small children
- Childcare facilities
- A map and directions to the venue which you can reproduce for the guests
- A blank bedroom plan
- The weekend/day schedule
- Venue specific criteria, ie: no alcohol allowed, etc?

TRANSPORT

Encourage people to arrange their own lifts/transport within the small groups. You may want to provide a coach if you have a large course.

BEDROOM PLAN

From the information gathered from the Weekend booking form (Form 4), start working on a bedroom plan for the guests.

- Be careful about unmarried couples. Make it clear to them, in a sensitive manner, that unmarried couples cannot share a room. If they are unhappy about this, suggest that they book alternative accommodation nearby
- Remember to put single parents somewhere central
- Try to keep members of each small group in adjacent bedrooms
- Leave this until the last minute to allow for late changes
- If there are shared bathrooms make sure they are single sex bathrooms

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ALPHA WEEKEND CHECKLIST

ALPHA WEEKEND/DAY AWAY CHECKLIST

Book the venue

Liaise with the venue

Select someone to arrange childcare

Ask someone to arrange afternoon activities

Ask someone to organise the evening entertainment

Ask someone to organise the bookshop

Arrange transport to the weekend

Complete your bedroom plan

Keep a list of who is coming and who has paid

Remember to take:

Any technical equipment required (if not provided by the venue)

Wine goblets

Bread and wine for communion

Baskets for the collection and also for bread

A lectern (if not provided)

A cashbox with spare change for the bookstall and outstanding payments

A calculator

Blank tapes if live talks are being recorded

Spare weekend schedules

Equipment and toys for child care

Name badges

Songbooks, spare Bibles and manuals

Tissues

Latest bedroom plan

SUGGESTED TIMETABLE FOR THE ALPHA WEEKEND

Distribute your timetable to the guests two weeks before they go on the Alpha Weekend, with the timetable on one side and a map of how to get to the venue on the other.

Alpha Weekend Timetable

FRIDAY

6.30 pm onwards	Arrive
7.00 pm - 10.00 pm	Supper
9.45 pm	A short introduction to the weekend

SATURDAY

8.30 am	Breakfast
9.30 am	Worship Who is the Holy Spirit?
10.45 am	Coffee

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11.15 am	What Does the Holy Spirit Do?
12.00 pm	Small groups
1.00 pm	Lunch Afternoon - free
4.15 pm	Tea - optional!
5.00 pm	Worship How Can I Be Filled with the Holy Spirit?
7.00 pm	Supper
8.30 pm	Entertainment - if you would like to contribute a song, sketch or anything, come prepared!
SUNDAY	
9.00 am	Breakfast
9.45 am	Small groups
10.30 am	How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life? Informal Holy Communion
1.00 pm	Lunch

DON'T FORGET TO BRING:

- Bible, *Alpha Course Manual* and notebook
- A sketch, song etc for the entertainment
- Sports gear (optional!)
- Waterproofs
- Towel & soap

ALPHA DAY AWAY TIMETABLE

SATURDAY

9.15 am	Arrive, registration and coffee
9.45 am	Worship Who Is the Holy Spirit and What Does He Do?
10.45 am	Coffee and small groups
11.30 am	How Can I Be Filled with the Holy Spirit?
1.15 pm	Lunch and free time (Activities, eg: game of football/walk, etc.)
3.30 pm	Tea
4.00 pm	Worship How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?
5.00 pm	Finish

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THE ALPHA CELEBRATION SUPPER PARTY AND LAUNCH EVENTS

IS THERE MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS?

The Alpha Celebration Supper or Drinks Parties provide an easy way for guests on the course to invite their friends and family to see what Alpha is all about. They are the hosts for their guests, so should arrive early to be able to welcome their guests. Those invited to this supper often become guests on the next course, so it is important to have Alpha invitations and free copies of *Why Jesus?*, *Why Christmas?* or *Why Easter?* available at the end.

Do your best to provide good food and a good atmosphere. Flowers, candles and tablecloths can make a big difference and the general aim is to make the evening seem like a special evening out.

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A suggested timetable for the Celebration Supper is as follows:

- 7.15 pm **Guests arrive and food/drinks or canapes are served**
It is advised not to say grace or have a formal opening – make the evening as relaxing as possible. Have a live jazz band or alternatively have jazz or classical music in the background.
- 8.15 pm **Welcome and thank you**
This is important, not just because we want to thank the people who have made the evening possible (waiters/waitresses, the caterers, etc) - they are helping from a servant heart - but to allow the guests to express their appreciation.
- 8.20pm **Testimonies**
The speaker leads into the testimonies ('I'd love to introduce you to one or two people who've done the last Alpha course'). The less warning the testimony guests have the better. Nicky Gumbel suggests the speaker goes around meeting potential testimony guests during the supper and asking them then to do their testimony. If people have too much warning they come with a prepared speech, and ideally it should be spontaneous. Include someone that has done the course and not become a Christian, but has nonetheless enjoyed the course. This is the most powerful person from the point of view of a guest.
- 8.35pm **Talk or DVD**
Is there more to life than this?
Alternative option is Explore DVD available from alphashop.org or contact the **Alpha Publications Hotline** (0845 758 1278 or alpha@stl.org).
- 9.00pm **Coffee**
Give out copies of *Why Jesus?*, *Why Christmas?* or *Why Easter?* and invitations to the next Alpha course.
- 9.30pm **Finish**
You will need to find a balance between allowing people to chat as long as they want to, and ensuring that the task force is not kept too late.

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The following will need to be done:

CHECKLIST

ADMINISTRATOR – ALPHA CELEBRATION SUPPER PARTY CHECKLIST	DONE
Finalise the count for the Celebration Supper Party and advise the caterer	
Identify two/three people from the course who could give their testimony, and make sure they are coming along to the supper	
Ensure there are sufficient Alpha invitations and copies of <i>Why Jesus?</i> , <i>Why Christmas?</i> or <i>Why Easter?</i> (depending on the season) available to distribute at the end of the talk	
Prepare signs to the entrance and toilets for the benefit of new guests	
Give the task force the Alpha Celebration Supper Party task force checklist	
Allocate each group to a table and draw up a plan if necessary	
Appoint a head steward in charge of set up and running of the evening	

TASK FORCE - ALPHA CELEBRATION SUPPER PARTY CHECKLIST	DONE
Set up a table and chairs for each group following the administrator's table plan	
Decorate each table to make it look like a special dinner party, using flowers, candles, tablecloths, etc	
Make sure the room temperature is comfortable	
Help guide cars to parking spaces	
If using the DVD set up the DVD player and monitor	
For live speakers make sure the microphone and stand are in place and tested	
Ensure the sound system is set up for the band	
Help prepare and serve food (waiting on tables) during the supper, and serve coffee after the talk	
Clear up the main venue at the end of the session	

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER ALPHA?

Before you start your course, you may want to think about how you will encourage those who have completed the course to develop their faith. This can be done in a number of ways. You may like to integrate those completing the course into existing home groups, or choose to establish new ones. Alternatively, you may like to run a follow-up course based upon the Alpha model. There are many options that your local Alpha Adviser or Resource Church leader will be happy to talk through with you.

All of these follow-up courses are available as books with study guides, audio recordings and manuals.

Challenging Lifestyle - a two-term course based on the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. This course deals with issues such as 'How to have an influence on society' and 'How to handle money'. The first six talks are now available on DVD with a manual. This is an ideal series for a small group to use after Alpha. Series 2 will be released in 2009.

A Life Worth Living - based on Philippians, this course is ideal for new Christians, available on DVD.

Searching Issues - the seven issues most often raised on Alpha including suffering, sex before marriage, other religions and New Age beliefs.

The Heart of Revival - ten Bible studies based on Isaiah 40-66, drawing out important truths for today.

God at Work is a course designed for small or mid sized groups, which can be run in either church groups or workplace fellowships. The course aims to equip people to find purpose in every aspect of their working life and to empower them to live this out with the utmost integrity. It is based on Ken Costa's book *God at Work* and consists of six sessions.

These can be obtained from alphashop.org or the Alpha Publications Hotline.

SAMPLE GUESTS' QUESTIONNAIRE



1) How did you first become aware of the Alpha course?

- Friend/ relative/ colleague
 Banner / poster
 Cinema Ad / bus posters
 Press
 TV
 Other: _____

2) Did you come to an Alpha supper party before the course?

- Yes No

3) Which of the following reasons best describe why you came on Alpha? Tick all that apply:

- Curiosity Spiritual search
 Had questions / wanted to find out more Came with a friend
 Looking for meaning / purpose in life Brought a friend / colleague / family member
 Other: _____

4) Were you a regular churchgoer before the course?

- Yes No Occasionally

5) Are you a regular churchgoer now?

- Yes No Occasionally

6) How would you have described yourself before the course, in terms of the Christian faith?

- Christian Undecided Non – Christian Atheist
 Agnostic Other _____

7) How would you describe yourself now, in terms of the Christian faith?

- Christian Undecided Non – Christian Atheist Agnostic Other _____

8) If the answer to 6) and 7) is different, when did the change occur?

- Alpha Weekend / Day Gradually over the course Other _____

Please describe your experience:

9) In what ways, if any, did you benefit from doing the Alpha course? Tick all that apply:

- Discovered a relationship with God through Jesus Made new friends
 Strengthened existing faith Feel more love / loved Found new purpose for life
 Feel more at peace Other _____

Further comments:

10) Which books did you buy, if any?

- Bible The Screwtape Letters Searching Issues
 Chasing the Dragon What's so Amazing about Grace?
 Questions of Life The Cross and the Switchblade Mere Christianity
 Other: _____

11) How could the course be improved eg talks, small groups, weekend etc?

12) Are you going to join a home group / pastorate?

- Yes No Maybe If Yes, which one? _____

14) Will you be attending church?

- Yes No Maybe If Yes, which one? - _____

15) Would you like to find out more about the work of Alpha?

- Yes No

16) Any other comments:

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ALPHA COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

The Directors of Alpha International write:

'We have always been keen to allow individuals who are running an Alpha International Course the flexibility to adapt it where it was felt necessary to allow for locally felt needs and where there was the desire to retain the essential elements, nature and identity of the course. Experience has shown though that this has been misunderstood and the resulting loss of integrity in some courses has given rise to considerable confusion. Now that Alpha International resources and publications are being used all around the world we have reluctantly had to draw up a copyright statement more tightly in order to preserve confidence and quality control. We are sure you will understand.'

- 1) With the exception of books published by Kingsway or its licensees (in which the author is stated to hold the copyright), all Alpha International publications and materials including booklets, tapes and graphics are copyright to Alpha International. Alpha International publications cover a wide range of ministries including the Alpha Course, The Marriage Preparation Course, The Marriage Course, Caring for Ex-Offenders, Building a Growing Church and Dynamic Prayer in The Local Church.
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- 3) Use of Alpha International publications is permitted only when in conjunction with the running or promotion of Alpha International courses. Resale, or the obtaining of payment in any other connection with any Alpha International publication is not permitted.
- 4) Alpha International asks that the name of any Alpha International course, or names similar to it should not be used in connection with any other Christian course. This request is made in order to:
 - avoid confusion caused by different courses having similar titles
 - ensure the uniformity and integrity of the courses
 - Maintain confidence in courses listed on the Alpha International register.

5) Alpha International accepts that minor adaptations to Alpha International courses may occasionally be desirable. These should only concern the length of the talks or the number of sessions. In each case the essential character of the course must be retained.

If an Alpha International course is adapted the person responsible must:

- only use such a course in their own church or parish
- not allow such a course to be used elsewhere
- Not publish or promote such a course.

This statement supersedes all previous statements relating to copyright in any Alpha International publication.

Revised June 2005

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THE ALPHA COPYRIGHT STATEMENT EXPLAINED

Unfortunately it has been necessary for us to write a copyright statement. Below are some frequently asked questions concerning the copyright of Alpha resources and the answers to those questions. Please read the Alpha Copyright Statement very carefully as this will answer many questions. The Alpha copyright will always remain with Alpha International, so if you encounter an issue or query outside the boundaries of the answers provided, you should always refer the query to Alpha International Publications at Holy Trinity Brompton.

Can I download the Alpha logo and use it for brochures, newsletters, invitations, etc?

Yes. This is on the understanding that it is used solely for the promotion of your particular Alpha course, and is not for resale in any way.

Can I make a single/several duplicate copies of the DVD/audio tapes for the use of our home groups?

No. Alpha resources should only be used in conjunction with the running or promotion of an Alpha course, no-one, whether they are a guest or a host, should be exposed to sub-standard copies.

Can I photocopy all or part of the manuals?

No. All aspects of the Alpha course revolve around providing guests with the best possible treatment (food, comfort, welcome, etc), and the quality of the resources should reflect this attitude. It is worth mentioning that it is actually very difficult to photocopy the course manual for less than £1.50, or the equivalent price in your country. Also many bookshops would give a discount on larger orders.

There may be the odd exception to the rule. Please liaise with Alpha International for more information.

THE ALPHA COURSE

Administrator's Handbook

If you are the administrator of an Alpha course then this handbook details everything you need to know!

It contains three main sections: planning, preparation and administration during the course.

There are timetables for each section with checklists to help you, and blank forms you may wish to use.

Full of practical help on areas from managing the task force to organising the weekend away, this guide will leave you fully equipped to administer your course.

alpha.org

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