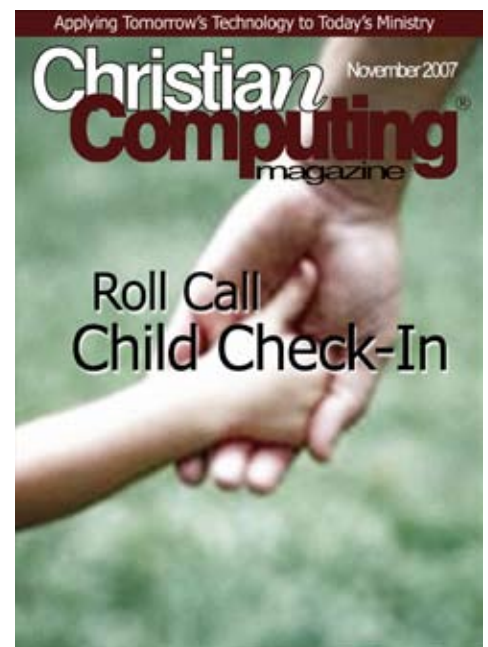


# Roll Call Child Check-In

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**A**s a church with a strong focus on children and families with children, we realized we needed a better way to keep track of our kids than hand-writing nametags each week, which we had done for some time. Our children's ministries had little security, no follow-up and no record of attendance.

In order to fulfill our desire to follow up with children, we needed a way to quickly and effectively track the individual attendance of each child every weekend. We have never recorded individual attendance on a class-by-class basis, so we began to explore our options. We discussed several different methods including paper logs, an Excel spreadsheet or manually entering attendance into our church database solution. In the end, we decided to implement an automated check-in station which would allow us to track attendance easily, quickly and with minimal errors.

One consideration in our choice was centralizing our data into one database. We knew if we tried to keep a separate database for children's attendance, the phone numbers and addresses would eventually become outdated. We also worried about being able to connect a child with his or her parents — often it is hard to identify the parents of a given child. We knew we needed to have one central database where all data was stored, including adult names, addresses, phone numbers, E-mail addresses, children's names and attendance data. This way, when an adult notified us of a change in address or phone number, the child's record would be automatically updated as well.

The check-in system we chose was Roll Call from By The Book ([www.bythebook.com/ccmag.html](http://www.bythebook.com/ccmag.html)). Roll Call, which we were already using as our church management system, allowed us to integrate attendance records with children already in our system and already attached to a parent.

Because of Roll Call's many customizable options, we have been able to adapt the Roll Call check-in process to fit our own systems and structures, instead of having to rework everything we are already doing to fit with a predefined, rigid set of check-in rules. The flexibility in Roll Call is very useful. We use a remote check-in station, on a movable card, to check children in to our weekend program for children, which is based on an airplane theme. Everything in the program is geared around an airplane and travel, from using videos of airplane takeoff and landings, to a flight atten-

dant serving mid-flight snacks to the younger children.

We were able to seamlessly integrate the Child Check-in into our existing structure. Each student gets assigned a 'passport', which they get stamped each week they attend. On the back of this passport, we have placed a Roll Call-generated badge, which contains the child's name and barcode.

All children get their passport when they enter the room. The child then walks to the check-in station and scans their passport's barcode to check-in. Once the passport is scanned, a name badge is printed out. We call this badge their 'boarding pass'— and all students are required to have a boarding pass before entering the flight.

We have found the children love being able to scan their own passport, and generate their own boarding passes each week. Once students are seated, and right after an interactive countdown, the flight attendant goes through the aisle and collects all the passports for distribution again next weekend.

When a visiting student arrives at the check-in station the first time, Roll Call allows for quick entry of the child into the Roll Call System, while also enrolling the student in the class. Quick Enroll allows entry of the child's information, such as parent(s) names, address,

birthday and any allergies, while also allowing you to easily omit information if it is unknown.

It is also possible on this Quick Enroll screen to add an existing child to the class, in the case the child is already entered in Roll Call, but is not currently enrolled in the class. Quick Enroll also allows you to add a child to an existing family, such as when a family has a new baby. A simple button allows you to easily search for parent's name and add a given child to the parent's record. A nametag — or boarding pass, in our case — is automatically printed once the Quick Enroll has been completed.

Roll Call allows the user to print out attendance reports on a class-by-class basis, customized to output whatever parameters you want to do. Some of our teachers want to know when a student misses three of the last four weeks. Others want to know which students are new attendees who have attended three of the last six weeks. With Roll Call's built-in reporting engine, these and other customized reports can be easily generated. We generate specific information on each attendance report, including name, address, phone number and birthday, and I was easily able to customize this information to print from the attendance report.

Roll Call is highly customizable, and offers customizable options, which make Roll Call's child check-in fit into a variety of churches, no matter how you do things. Roll Call allows for check-in either manual (type in each child's name as they arrive) or automatic via an infrared barcode scanner. These barcodes can be printed on a permanent badge, as we have done by incorporating the badge as part of the passport, or barcodes can be on a small 'key fob', a small keychain-tag with a barcode on it, which can be assigned to each student. Key fobs can be custom-made with your church or ministry logo on it. This is particularly useful for youth group check-in.

There are two sizes of nametags with can be printed automatically at check-in. With the larger size, there are many customizable options—you choose what information should be printed on nametags and what information you do not. All nametags include child's name, parent name (if parents have been entered for the student) and the name of the current class. Optional information includes an image (such as a church or class logo), badge number, barcode (for optional check-out) and family number.

Another option we use is the ability to print multiple nametags per student. This enables us to print one nametag for the student, while giving the duplicate nametag to the parent, which strengthens the security of our classrooms. Parents can be required to show their duplicate tag to pick up their student.

Technically, Roll Call is very versatile, and works on any PC or MAC, including a mixed network. Supported Operating Systems include MAC OS 9.2, OS X, and any PC with Windows98se or later, including Vista. Because Roll Call is a stand-alone install, the check-in station can be located anywhere in your building with network access (either wired or wireless) to the Roll Call Server—no need for a high-speed Internet connection throughout the building.

In all, we have been very happy with the choice of Roll Call for our child check-in needs. It has easily filled all of our requirements, as well as adding a lot of features we had not considered. Because of the customizable options available, we were able to adapt the Check-in process to our needs.



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