

# Camp Tips for Parents

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## Preparing to send your child to camp:

**Q: When should I start researching for a summer camp for my child(ren) to attend?**

A: In the fall. Start by getting on camp mailing lists and research websites. Most camps start the application and enrollment process in the winter and spring. Make sure to complete applications and return them by their due dates.

**Q: What resources are available to select a good, quality camp?**

A: The American Camping Association (ACA) lists all camps and their descriptions. These camps have been accredited by the ACA.

[www.americancampingassociation.org](http://www.americancampingassociation.org) . Camps are accredited based on health, safety and program quality. Also, [www.campparents.org](http://www.campparents.org) is a great resource for parents.

**Q: What items should I pack for my child to take to camp? How should I dress my child for camp?**

A: While packing lightly is encouraged, it is always best to be fully prepared. Anticipate rain, chilly nights and heat. Also expect your child to get wet and dirty, so extra sets of clothes are a must. If the camp is 7 days long, I would recommend packing for 9-10 days. Pack comfortable clothes and shoes. Make sure to find out if there are special “dress up” occasions at camp, such as a dance or talent show. Pack bedding, towels, hygiene products, sunscreen, bug spray, flashlight, disposable camera, envelopes & stationary. Also pack comfort items, such as a nightlight, stuffed animal or photos of family members. All medications & inhalers should be sent to the camp director as well. Valuables should NOT be sent to camp. And be sure to label all of your child’s belongings.

**Q: Can I interview the camp staff? What kind of questions should I ask?**

A: Yes, it is important to feel comfortable with the camp director before sending your child to camp. Find out what the camp philosophy is and if you agree with it. Ask what the director’s background is and how staff are selected and trained. A director should be trained in safety, emergency procedures, behavior management and child abuse protection. Ask what kinds of activities are available at camp and what the normal daily schedule is like. Ask about the disciplinary policies and if they coincide with the expectations of your family. Ask about the ratio of staff to campers. The ACA advises one adult per 6 children and 1 adult per 10 teens.

**Q: How much do summer camps costs? Is there any type of financial assistance offered for summer camp?**

A: The average cost for 1 week at an overnight camp is \$390 and the average for one week of day camp is about half of that. However, many camps are significantly less expensive or even free. Contact the camp director to find out if the camp offers financial assistance. Many camps offer discounted rates for early enrollment or for families enrolling multiple children.

**Q: How should I help my child prepare for camp for the first time?**

A: Practice sleepovers away from home. Involve your child in choosing the camp. Discuss camp activities with your child and have a positive family attitude about camp. Have your child practice activities that they might participate in at camp, such as sleeping in a sleeping bag, getting into a pool, taking showers instead of baths and writing letters.

**Q: How should we cope with homesickness?**

A: Send care packages and letters to children at camp. Avoid using phrases such as: “Just try it for one day and you can leave” or “If you stay until Wednesday, then we will come and get you.” If your child calls from camp, be calm and reassuring. You know your child best, so if you feel that your child should come home, make arrangements promptly. In that case, focus on the positive and try camp again next year.

**Q: How do I know if my child is ready to go to camp?**

A: If your child is younger than 7 years old, you may want to start with a day camp. You can evaluate if your child is ready for camp by observing his behaviors. Does he normally have positive overnight experiences away from home? Does your child bring up the topic of camp and express desires to attend camp?