

# Summer CAMP GUIDE

— FOR —  
PARENTS



[WWW.CAMPHOPPERS.COM](http://WWW.CAMPHOPPERS.COM)

# 10 Things to Look for When Selecting a Camp

Each year millions of kids start summer by attending a camp program. Whether it's basketball, dance, art or simply enjoying the companionship of friends in another activity, you want to be certain they are safe. Without a sound reference from friends or family members, selecting a camp for your child can quickly become overwhelming.

Other than personal references, a parent can review state guidelines for a camp provider. Health, safety and other regulations vary by state. However, the American Camp Association (ACA) is a membership-based organization that provides a peer review of camp providers. It's a voluntary accreditation that assures families that the provider has made a commitment to a safe and healthy environment to their children.

Be certain to review the 10 tips below for selecting a camp to insure both you and your child will have a great summer break.

## **1. Experienced, trained staff**

Find out if the provider employs experienced, trained staff. Ask how long have they been employed by the organization and if they conduct background checks on staff. You will also want to know if they require staff to get certified in CPR or any other training relevant to their role.

The number of counselors to kids is equally important. Many providers have a select number of staff and then augment them with the use of summer interns. In this instance, you may wish to ask how they select interns to work with children.

## **2. Fun engaging activities**

Select a camp that interests your child or expands their knowledge base. Finding a camp that gets them out of their comfort zone to learn a new skill can be rewarding and fun.

If you choose to keep your child enrolled with the same camp provider over the summer you want to make certain camp themes and activities change weekly. Otherwise, your child may become bored and unsatisfied quickly.

## **3. Outdoor activities**

Many camp facilities only have indoor space. If this is the case be sure to find out what type of indoor activities are planned to help them burn off energy.

If the camp provides an outdoor activity find out what is planned. Will activities be conducted onsite or at a nearby park? Will your child be crossing busy streets to get to the planned activity?

## **4. Weekly offsite field trips**

Some camps provide an offsite trip to amusement parks, museums, the zoo and more during the week. Ask how your child will be transported to these activities and if any additional fees will be required.

## **5. Make-up of attendees**

A common practice among providers is to group children by age or grade level per camp program. This allows your child to align common interests as well as assist providers in developing the appropriate learning tools for each skill level.

If your child is the only boy or girl in a class of twenty they may not have the same interest during scheduled break time. This can make for a long week of them feeling left out. Most providers will tell you their camp is appropriate for any gender. However, if the camp theme is Frozen, it most likely it will be heavily attended by one gender over another.

## **6. Hours of operation**

What no camp on Friday? Camp opens at 9 a.m. and closes at 3 p.m.? Look for camps that fit your schedule. Half day programs, daily camps, and before and after care programs may be available to better suit your schedule.

## **7. Location**

Proximity is usually a major deciding factor when seeking a camp for your child. However, you may wish to consider a camp in another city if you are traveling for work, visiting relatives, or just want to enroll your child in a special camp not offered in your area. This will allow you to combine a change of scenery with a vacation.

## **8. Additional costs and fees**

Often times the camp enrollment fee only covers the basic hours of camp operation (9am-3pm). Additional fees are common for before/after care hours. However, fees for off-site

field trips can come to many as a surprise. It's not uncommon for the provider to add their cost to the enrollment fee for these activities.

You may need to pack your child's lunches and snacks everyday. Meals are not always included in the base fee. Your provider may include snacks and lunch, snacks only or neither. It's a good idea to ask. Even if they provide lunch, it may be catered from an offsite vendor and additional fees may apply.

## **9. Safety**

When a parent sends their child to camp, they want to feel that they have left them in a safe environment with capable individuals. It's important to know the provider's check in/out procedures. Asking if the camp requires identification for the person picking up your child as well as a sign-in procedure with a staff representative on hand during drop-off and pick-up is key.

Believe it or not many camp providers are housed within public facilities. Knowing whether the bathroom is located in the camp room or in a public area can potentially divert an accident or something even worse. If the restroom is located outside the classroom ask how your child will be escorted during unscheduled bathroom breaks.

If your child requires certain accommodations make certain the provider can assist. Feel free to ask questions relevant to your child. Providers aren't aware of your child's allergies even though many children can experience life-threatening

events. If your child is allergic to nuts or any other food item be certain to list it on the camp provider form as well as inform any staff member that will be attending to your child during the week.

## 10. Communication plan

It's always nice for the camp to provide input on your child's camp experience when you pick them up. Not all camps will provide an input sheet, especially after a certain age, but it's helpful when they do.

Be certain to get the providers after hours phone number. There might be an evening in which you are stuck in traffic or you need someone else to pick your child up from camp. If so, having provider contact information will come in handy.

If your child becomes ill at camp the provider may require you to pick them up within an hour. Ask about illness or any other protocols they have in place for injury and other matters.

"As a busy parent, I found it challenging choosing a camp for my son. Hopefully, these 10 tips will be useful during your selection process.

Tonya Elmore, founder  
[camphoppers.com](http://camphoppers.com)

**Visit [camphoppers.com](http://camphoppers.com) to discover and share camps in your area.**

