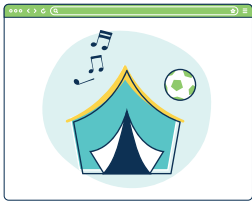


PREPARING YOUR KIDS FOR SUMMER CAMP

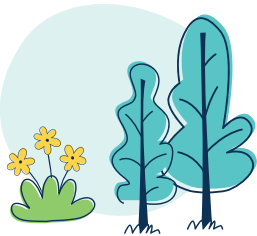


In the weeks leading up to summer camp, your kids could experience a wild ride of emotions. They might feel excitement and delight about the idea one minute and concern or apprehension the next. **Fortunately, there are some simple, straightforward steps you can take to prepare them for the experience and set them up for success.**



GO TO THE WEBSITE

Sit down with your kids and look at the camp's website together. Look at photos and talk about the different activities you see there. There may also be a camp video that you could watch together. As you talk, keep the conversation positive. Discuss how new experiences can be fun.



GO OUTSIDE

Look for opportunities to spend time outside before camp. This will help your kids to be better prepared for a camp environment. A backyard picnic lunch, a visit to a neighborhood park, or even a walk around the block can do wonders to get them acclimated to the outdoor environment at camp.



PLAN A VISIT

Many camps offer open house events so that campers and their caregivers can visit ahead of time. You'll get to meet some of the staff, tour the camp facilities, and maybe experience some camp activities. Campers will feel more comfortable when they arrive for summer camp if they see some familiar faces and have a basic understanding of the layout of the property. Even if your camp doesn't offer an open house event, contact them to see if there is an opportunity for a visit.



TRY A SLEEPOVER

If your kids have never spent the night away from home, it's a good idea to try this out ahead of time. Allowing them to have a sleepover with a trusted relative or friend of the family is a great way to practice for camp. If your kids aren't ready for overnight camp, some camps offer day-only summer camp options.



PRACTICE SELF-CARE

For younger campers especially, some self-care skills might need a little practice. Do your little ones know how to brush their own hair, start their own shower, or tie their own shoes? Camp staff provide exceptional care for kids, but the more they can do on their own, the better prepared your kids will be for camp.



TALK IT OUT

Talk about camp often to help your kids mentally prepare. Discuss things that might be uncomfortable for them but express it in a positive light. For example, “It’s going to be dark, but you’ll see so many stars,” or “You won’t have your phone, but you’ll have so many new friends.” Also, do some troubleshooting like, “What should you do if ... (you lose your flashlight, you don’t know where to go, etc.)” In almost every circumstance, the answer will be, “Ask one of the grown-ups.” Camp staff have one primary objective—to care for the needs of your child.



PACK YOUR BAGS

When it’s time to pack for camp, make sure they have everything they need. Most camps will provide a list of items to bring (as well as items NOT to bring). It’s a great idea to write their names on the clothing tags to avoid mix-ups. As much as possible, let them do the packing. Remember, they’ll have to pack their bags again at the end of the week, so this is a great way for them to get some experience under your supervision. It’s also a good idea to include a plastic bag for dirty clothes, because camp clothes can get downright filthy.



ARRIVE EXCITED

It’s normal for even returning campers to experience some last-minute nerves when arriving for a new week of camp. Use statements like, “Let’s meet who will be taking care of you this week,” and “This place looks so fun,” rather than commenting on how hot it is or how many bugs there might be. If you express confidence, campers will pick that up from you, and you’ll be preparing them for a great week.

WHILE THE KIDS ARE AT CAMP



HANDLING HOMESICKNESS

Even kids who love summer camp can feel homesick when evening comes and they long for their own bed. If you receive a call from one of your kids experiencing homesickness, ask them questions like, “What’s your favorite thing at camp so far?” or “What activities are you going to do tomorrow?” This can help them refocus on the fun of camp. Let them know you are proud of them for trying camp. If they are insisting that they want to come home, try a compromise by asking them to give it one more day. Many times, this can make all the difference.



SELF-CARE

Use this time to care for yourself. This might be the perfect opportunity to reconnect with an old friend, enjoy your favorite meal, or just catch up on sleep. The kids are receiving excellent care, and we want this to be a blessing to you as well. Take some extra time to spend thinking, planning, and praying, free from interruptions. When camp comes to an end, you’ll be refreshed and ready to hear about their amazing experiences.