



Child Care Referral Service

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HOW TO CHOOSE A CAMP

Camp is a great place for children to unlock their potential and discover the world. This special environment helps young people develop positive self-esteem and enhance their social skills while having fun!

With more than 8,500 day and resident camps in the United States, choosing a camp may seem overwhelming. Selecting the right program is often a matter of knowing your options and asking the right questions.

CAMP PROGRAM

It is important to know children's personalities and identify what camp programs will benefit them the most. When looking at camps, include your child in the decision-making process. By working together, you and your child will find a camp experience that will be cherished for a lifetime.

Some camps have structured programs where camp staff schedule all of the camper's activities. Others are more flexible, allowing campers to choose some or all of their daily activities.

Most camps have a wide assortment of outdoor activities, sports, and games. Many camps offer specialized programs in aquatics, hiking, horseback riding, and the performing arts.

Camp activities are not limited to children. A growing number of adults, families, and seniors are discovering programs to fit their needs, too.

TYPES OF CAMPS

- **Resident Camp:** Children stay for extended periods from five days to eight weeks. They sleep overnight in cabins, tents, teepees, or another form of shelter and participate in a variety of supervised activities.
- **Day Camp:** Many offer a variety of programs for children ages five to fifteen. Most are coed and their programs are similar to resident camps, but without sleeping quarters. Campers are usually transported, often by bus or van, to the facility each morning and returned home in the late afternoon.
- **Travel and Trip Camp:** Participants in trip programs move themselves to sites by hiking, horseback, canoeing, or other self-propelled means. They usually stay in group campsites, in national and state parks, or other outdoor surroundings. Participants carry tents and sleeping bags with them. At travel camps, groups are transported by car or bus to explore geographic and topographic places of interest.
- **Persons with Disabilities:** While camps provide facilities and services for a broad range of children, there are some that provide specialized services for persons with disabilities. Search the [ACA's Interactive Camp Database](#) or contact one of your local social service agencies, such as the United Way or Easter Seal Society for programs in your area.

SESSION LENGTH

Camp can fit within any family's busy schedule. Sessions run anywhere from five days to a full eight-week session. Some facilities are in operation year-round and others offer special seasonal programs throughout the year.

COST

Camp remains a very affordable option for anyone regardless of background or location. Fees vary, but range from \$15 to \$55 per day for programs operated by non-profit agencies, youth groups, or public agencies. Independently-run camps cost between \$35 and \$80 per day.

ACCREDITATION

When you choose a camp accredited by the American Camping Association, you have assurance that many important questions already have been asked and answered. These questions have been developed by professionals over a period of many years. They are questions the average person might not think of, but ones camp professionals feel are important to camp operation.

Accreditation is a process of peer-review and self-examination. Camp owners/operators agree to uphold a stringent code of practices recognized among camp professionals as basic to camp operation.

At least once every three years, a team of two or more trained camp professionals, known as visitors, observe the camp's operation while it is in session and compare its practices with industry's standards.

ACA-accredited camps have met or exceeded up to 300 nationally recognized standards. They address everything from the director's background, to how foods are prepared and stored, to the qualifications of the medical personnel and professional staff. There are additional standards applied to aquatics, horseback riding, travel, and trip programs.

These standards are continuously evaluated and updated to reflect the state of the art in the camp profession.

The American Camping Association accreditation logo indicates that camp's management is committed to operating in agreement with the highest standards established for camps and is willing to voluntarily invite trained camp professionals to verify compliance with the standards.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

- **Camp Fairs:** These events are held in the fall and spring at schools and public facilities. Directors set up information booths to introduce their camps. Slides or videotapes are usually shown and brochures explaining the operation's activities and philosophy are handed out.
- **Local Directories:** Some sections of the American Camping Association publish free directories listing ACA-accredited camps in their region. For a copy, check the phone book for the ACA Section Office nearest you.
- **Referral Services:** This is another free service provided by selected sections of the American Camping Association. Experienced staff take information from each caller and then match that person with camps offering those programs.
- **Guide to ACA-Accredited Camps:** Search from ACA-accredited camps in ACA's Interactive Camp Database or to order a print version of the Guide to ACA-Accredited (updated annually) call 800-428-CAMP or order online. The Guide lists every ACA-accredited camp in the United States. All entries are displayed alphabetically by state and are divided into resident and day categories. Every entry lists the camp's location, fees, session lengths, and facilities.
- **Accreditation Standards for Camp Programs and Services (1998):** The 300 standards used by ACA to accredit camps. Some libraries may carry this book or it can be ordered through the ACA bookstore.

Information taken from: <http://www.acacamps.Org/parents/howto.htm>

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