

Summer Camp Scoop

a youth camp planning guide



Christian Retreats Network

Your Partner in Effective Off-site Ministry

- Themes
- Packing List
- Tips for Parents
- Recreation Activities
- Following Up After Camp



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Expertise When You Need It!

Would you like help planning activities for camp this summer? Contact our retreat planning team at 877-833-2272. We'd be glad to point you in the right direction, coach your planning team, and explain how to use our downloadable resources.

Our team includes the expertise of pastors, event planners, team building consultants, and all around fun people! Tell us about your event at: info@christianretreatsnetwork.org

Summer Camp Theme



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A Good Place to Start

Summer camp is awesome!! I remember every year that's what my youth group friends and I looked forward to... it was a big deal! You got to meet new people, play wacky games, hoot and holler with no parental correction, and engage in a level of worship like no other. To remember my experiences and memories now... well they all sort of blend together into one big camp experience but there is one way I can recall each year individually... the theme.

Camp themes are a big deal and can potentially be a big turn off for potential attendees. Make sure you put some thought into this area of your event... although you may feel that it lacks importance. For me, I can look at pictures and recall specifics by relating what the camp theme was for that particular year... both good and bad ones stuck with me.

After attending camp growing up and now planning several events of my own here's what I can share with you about a theme:

Make it your 'brand' for that week.

Base everything around it from speaker's messages, games and competitions, apparel. Even develop a cool logo or image as well as some of the terms/lingo around the theme to use throughout the event.

Stay away from fads.

Unless you know 100% of the attendees like Hunger Games then I would stay away from it. Using a fad theme could actually turn off potential attendees that despise that specific fad or feel it is childish.

Back your theme with scripture.

It doesn't have to be an entire chapter or psalm, just something simple and meaningful to the purpose of your event. If done right, the camp theme should stick with the students well after camp, so wouldn't it be cool to have a theme and scripture stuck in their heads especially if you have several non-church students attending.

Don't be afraid to steal.

No God won't care about this one, I promise. If you're stuck and can't think of a good idea then hop on Google. Use blogs, camp/ministry sites, or other events to get ideas. They've done the creative thinking for you.





Are Your Kids Ready for Camp?



The weather is warming up and the flowers are in bloom, which can only mean one thing around here: it's almost camp season. I recently read an article saying that kids who have completed 2nd grade are ready to spend a week or two at camp. Now, I don't have any kids, but my little brother just finished that grade and I couldn't imagine him being from home that long. Not that he's not independent or smart, because he definitely is, but a week is really a long time to be away from home. So for parents out there with the same feelings, I have compiled a list to see if your child really is ready.

1. If they can't stop asking you about it.

Their desire to go means that they are confident in themselves to participate. Keep in mind that younger kids are not at the age to have camp forced upon them. In their teens, maybe, but otherwise make sure they WANT to go.

2. If a child is fairly independent.

A child that is happy with going to school and sports without crying or clinging to you is probably ready to handle this time without you.

3. If they do well at sleepovers with friends or relatives.

In that case, they will probably be comfortable sleeping anywhere.

4. If they can shower, change and go to the bathroom by themselves, because the camp counselor isn't going to help them.

5. Most importantly, if you are confident in your child's ability to be away from you.

Be sure to share that confidence with your child. Let them know that you know they can do it.

If you still aren't sure about sending your kid alone, start with a family camp or retreat. That way, they can get comfortable with the idea and schedule, but still have you there if needed. Check out Parents and Camp on page 11 for some ways to help prepare kids before they leave.

Camp is a wonderful experience that is often the highlight of a kid's summer. Making that decision to go for the first time can be a little scary. Just remember that age alone is not an absolute criterion. It really depends on the child.

Bridging the “Gap”



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Preparing Your Youth Group for Camp

There’s always that gap between planning and attending summer camp. That time where it seems to slip from everyone’s mind, because it is too far away to start packing, yet all the planning has already been taken care of. So what do you do in that gap? You get kids ready for camp. No matter how far away it seems, it’s never too early to start preparing them for what is sure to be one of the best experiences of their summer.



One way to do this is by teaching relevant lessons at youth group and Sunday school. Many camps have a theme, which is a great way to keep everything on track. Teach lessons that incorporate that theme and get them thinking about the kind of things they will be doing and discussing at camp. Think about it like a TV show. The season finale builds up all this suspense and questions that have you anticipating the start of the next season. The same thing applies here. Build up the lessons that get them excited to find out what happens when they get to camp.

Another way to help kids get mentally ready for camp is by bringing in someone who has been before. Have him or her give a testimony about their experience. Be prepared for life-changing stories. This will show new attendees just what the power of camp can do. For kids, it is one thing to hear adults/event planners talk about the upcoming event, and completely different to hear about it from someone their age who has been. This person can also share tips and answer questions about what to bring and activities to do. A promo or recap video would also work.



That gap is shrinking every day, and before you know it, your youth group will be on the road headed for camp. Make sure they are ready, so that they get the absolute most out of the experience. They will sure be happy you did.

Keys to Teen Camp



A CRN Resource

Three Key Lessons for Teens to Learn at Camp

It's a joy to see youth come to camp and watch them unloading the buses and vans. They know it's a time to have fun, meet new friends and hopefully be open to some life changes. In the summer of 1979, my life was forever changed during Teen Camp. That summer, I learned the importance of the Lord leading my life.

There are three key lessons we want every teen to hopefully learn at Teen Camp; commitment, faithfulness and trust. As they learn these three, may they be a part of Christ and His Church.

Commitment is an important aspect of a teen's life. The Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy, who was a young man between the ages of 14-17, to be committed. "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge." 1 Timothy 6:20 NKJV. Paul wanted Timothy to guard his commitment to the things that had been trusted to him. May teens learn at camp to guard what has been committed to them.



Faithfulness is another area that youth need to understand and practice. Youth need to be faithful to Christ and His Church. The writer of Hebrews instructs us as believers to be faithful. " ... not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:25 NKJV. May youth have a strong desire to be faithful to God's House and His work.

Trust in a young person's life is very important and is so needed. The question often asked is "who can we trust"? Solomon, who was a very wise man, inspires us to trust in the Lord. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV. Trust Him with the future, for He has a plan for everyone.

If you are a leader, make sure to keep these three as a guide when scheduling activities. One of the best ways to reinforce messages is through scripture. Therefore, a good idea would be to make small print outs of the above scriptures and pass them out during different times of your retreat and to also incorporate them into your worship message. If you need a little help with adding in the message, try a team building program. Many are designed to specifically teach those three things, both for the Lord and others.

This year at Teen Camp, may every teen learn the importance of commitment, faithfulness and trust. These three keys will help in every area of life as they face their tomorrows.

Numbers Don't Lie

Evaluating the Person, Not Just the Experience

After 6 and ½ years, 190,000 miles and a million memories, it was finally time for me to trade in my Malibu for something new. Following months of searching and comparing online, I headed to the dealer with the utmost confidence I had found the perfect match for me; a vehicle that is going to last me the next 10 years (hopefully!). I signed some papers, wrote a check and headed home in my new ride. Immediately, I became bombarded with surveys from the dealership asking about my experience with the salesperson, my thoughts on the car, etc.

If you have any experience planning events, this should all sound familiar. Countless time spent researching and planning leads up to simply hours that everything happens. And then you write a check and go home. Soon after, you send out a survey to hear what the guests thought. As with any experience, feedback is necessary to see what went well and what could be improved.

Did you know there is actually something missing from your survey? Yes, you have new ideas for next time and everyone loved the speaker. The logistics are fine. But how do you measure someone's spiritual growth? After all, wasn't that the goal of your event?

Retreats, camps and whatever other events your church holds may not get the acknowledgement they deserve. Too many pass it off as a weekend of fun, instead of a life-altering experience. But the standard evaluation simply takes the guest experience immediately after returning home, while ignoring the personal growth that reveals itself later. Signs may include, but are not limited to: stronger leadership skills, growth in faith, improved attitude, closer friendships, and increased activity in the church.

The way to follow up after a youth retreat/summer camp is by sending out a survey to parents in which they assess behavioral differences in their camper(s). Remember, this won't immediately take effect, so wait a few weeks or months before sending it.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- Has your student shown a greater interest in attending church?
- Has your student shown a greater interest in participating in church activities such as youth group?
- Has there been any significant changes in attitude?
- Does your student read the Bible more often?
- Has your student been more helpful around the house?
- Has your student asked more questions or started conversations about God/faith?
- Has your student offer to lead others in prayer?



After collecting these results, the most important thing is to do something with this information. Use it to present to your church members the importance of camp, especially if there is a debate on funding/continued use. Use it along with camper testimonies to promote the next event to prospective attendees. You should also use it to increase the experience, just like you would with suggestions on food, lodging and activities. For example, if after your last event not many showed an interest in reading the Bible more, then designate reading times and passages to make them more comfortable and let them know that this is a source for their questions. You can also give them specific passages to read based on different situations so that they know what to look for when they go home. Another example is if very few show an interest in praying out loud. Make it a priority to have group prayer times that encourage guests to pray with and over one another.

As for my new car, I wouldn't say it has had too much effect on me, except maybe the slightly smug attitude of being able to remote start it while enjoying the comfort of the indoors. But off-site ministry has shown time and again to change people's lives. Stick some numbers to it and show your church just how powerful these events can be. After all, numbers like this don't lie.



Team Building



A CRN Resource

Breaking the Cliques and Connecting the Shy Kids

The video was depressing. A youth pastor asked his niece from a different community to come to Sunday night youth group and just sit in the back before service. Then he set up a hidden camera to watch what would happen. The camera showed groups of kids talking, laughing, and generally being kids, but no one even noticed the visitor sitting alone. When the video was played back to the youth, it was an eye-opening moment. While the youth group would have described themselves as friendly and inclusive, the video evidence showed otherwise (By the way, youth pastors...DO THIS ACTIVITY!)

On my challenge course at Lake Williamson Christian Center (the St. Louis region retreat center in the Christian Retreats Network) one of the things I hear frequently from youth pastors and teachers is, "I want to break up the cliques." Truthfully, challenge courses are a great tool for forging relationships and restructuring group dynamics.

"Damien and Carlos" (not their real names) were two students that did not get along in school. Teachers actively kept these boys separated. I did not know this the day I put the two of them together on our high ropes course. As both boys struggled with their fear of heights, they only had each other to rely on. When they came down off the course, Damien turned to his nemesis and said, "Carlos, you are my friend for life!"

"Valerie and Emma" had come to a point where they did not interact with others in their youth group. Some considered them stuck up, but the truth was they felt uncomfortable and unaccepted by the rest of the group. During a session of team initiatives, the youth pastor asked that I separate the pair into different small groups. The decision paid off as each girl found their voice in the subgroups. Their friendship remained solid, but they realized they could have fun with the other members of the youth group.

All this leads me to free time in your retreat schedule. Free time is probably the WORST way to create group growth and breakdown cliques. Without an outside catalyst, few teenagers have the nerve to step out of their comfort zone and meet new people. During free time, kids will naturally gravitate to their cliques, and shy kids will sit alone.

A 10-year old survey once stated the main reason people left a church was because they did not feel like a part of that community. My hope is that you will actively seek to make your group a welcoming one.



Swag Ideas For Your Camp

Summer camp is awesome! It's full of fun games, great friends, and unforgettable experiences. But what are you doing to help your campers remember those "unforgettable experiences"? What do they have to commemorate their week spent away?

The camp store is a staple in the camp world. It allows your camp to raise some funds, promote itself, and, of course, let's campers show off where they've been. The real question any camp leader should be asking is: "What kind of products do campers want?". Spending money on something that campers won't buy not only means lost funds, but also you have to do something with the leftovers. These aren't freebies for participating. They have to be good.

Here's a few ideas for this summer:

1. **Water bottle** – This is great for while at camp, too. You can get an inexpensive flip top sports bottle or maybe go high quality with an aluminum or glass version.

2. **Beanies and Snapbacks** – These head toppers are in, especially for teens and 20s.



3. **Patches and stickers** – Which can go on bookbags, notebooks, jackets, etc.

4. **Notebooks** – Whether campers use it to write about their camp experience or jot down some devotional notes, these will be a big hit. This is often an item forgotten at home.

5. **Sunglasses** – It's summer. Chances are the sun will be shining and eyes will need shaded.

6. **Rain Poncho** – In case it isn't always sunny, disposable rain ponchos are great for keeping campers dry.

7. **Temporary tattoos** – If your camp centers around a certain Bible verse or theme, you can use that text. Plus, parents will be happy because it will soon wash away.

8. **Drawstring bags** – Got to have something to put all your camp stuff in.



9. **Lanyard** – While many use lanyards to hold their keys, at camp they can also function as name tag holders. And when the kids go home, they can be used functionally and fashionably.

10. **T-shirts** – If you don't come home with a camp shirt, did you even go to camp??

Now you may be wondering what to put on these items. Hopefully, your camp has a theme or name. Use that! It doesn't have to be overly fancy or elaborate. Throw the icon or promo image on the product and call it done. Again, it's something that should remind campers of their time with you. But it shouldn't cost you a ton of money. Just make sure to let the campers know before arrival that there are souvenirs for sale.


Camper to Counselor Ratio

An Important Pre-event Math Problem

Have you ever allowed your kids to have a big sleepover at your house? 10+ kids eating junk food, staying up way too late, and staggering back out to mom's minivan at 9 a.m. with pillow and sleeping bag in tow. Do you remember what your house looked like after the dust finally settled? Half-empty soda cans covering every flat surface, bags of chips crinkling under foot, melted ice cream cartons spilling over the top of the trashcan. Now consider those same 10+ kids having a sleepover for **4 consecutive nights** without parental supervision. This is what we in the industry call "Summer Camp".

There is one person that stands in the way of that 4-night sleepover from turning into a modern day Lord of the Flies; the **Camp Counselor**. These summer camp heroes are on the front lines making sure the students (and the property) survive the week. And while finding great counselors is a challenge by itself, event planners also must consider how many counselors will be required. Or more specifically, what is the desired ratio of adult staff to students? Now, each camper doesn't need an adult breathing down their neck the entire week, making sure they are behaving properly. However, for the safety, organization and stress level (specifically of the event planner), it is important to have enough staff on hand.

The good news is that there is a simple formula to calculate how many counselors you need:


$$\frac{\text{campers}}{\text{average age}} + \text{nights} = \text{counselors}$$

Just kidding. Not every group or camp is the same, and therefore they can't all go by the same rules. Here are some things to consider as you decide how many counselors you'll need:

How do the rooms look?

Are the campers going to be in large, open rooms with 10 or more beds? Or will everyone be staying in motel-style rooms that sleep no more than 5 or 6? The simplest way to determine the number of counselors needed is to plan 1 for each room. However, if you're going to be using very large or very small rooms, then you may need to reconsider. If the rooms only sleep 3 or 4 people, then you may need to have each counselor in charge of multiple rooms. The best way to map this out is by literally mapping it out, using a rooming layout of the lodging building. If the rooms are small and one counselor will be watching over a few rooms, make sure all of those rooms are in one chunk and that the counselor's room is right in the middle of it. Even if they can't monitor the students in the actual room, staying close by will help them hear any potential problems. On the flip side, it is important that the kids know where the counselor is staying, so that they know where to go in the case of an emergency.



How does the schedule look?

Do you have lots of free time set aside for your event? Or do you plan to have structured activities from the beginning of the day until the end? The way you structure your schedule can influence how many students one counselor can effectively manage. Supervising children during free time with lots of recreational options can be a real challenge; especially if the facility is spread out. In these scenarios, just keeping kids in the same general area can be difficult. And so if this is how your event is structured, you may want to keep the camper-to-counselor ratio small. However, if you have most of the day planned out hour by hour with structured activities, then each counselor can likely manage more campers. If students are bouncing around from activity to activity, it can be easiest to have a counselor per activity (depending on the number of players, one counselor may be able to manage a few). This keeps all the kids supervised, without having each counselor chase a certain group.

How old are the campers?

Younger campers generally require more supervision than older kids and teens. So if your attendees are in elementary school, you may need to consider having more counselors. As we all know, the simplest tasks can become difficult for a young child who's away from home for the first time. Your counselors will not appreciate being in charge of 12 2nd graders who all can't find their shoes.



Who's paying?

If you're being charged a full price for each counselor that attends, then you may need to be judicious with how many counselors you plan for. But if each counselor is paying their own way to attend, then you can likely afford to recruit more. Knowing how each counselor affects your bottom line is key to finding that threshold. Negotiating the price before sign-up can also help you determine if you will have to put a capacity on the number of attendees. It is unfortunate, but budgeting and staff numbers are a crucial part of the planning process.

At the end of the day, there is no exact formula for finding the right camper to counselor ratio. However, if you keep the previous questions in mind, it can help to make the decision easier. Counselors are the ones that keep balance between camp and chaos. Make sure you have enough this summer.

Parents and Camp

Preparing Your Kids For Camp

What did the buffalo say to his son leaving for summer camp? Bison.



Now, that could be what you say to your kids as they leave for camp this summer, but maybe there is more preparation involved than just a funny goodbye. We know that camp is as big of a deal for parents as it is for kids. Whisking your kid off to some distant place without you there to make sure they are okay can be rather scary. Fortunately, we have come up with some ways you can help your child prepare for the super fun, life changing, friendship building, memory making experience that it is.

For starters, the essential part of going anywhere is packing. Yes, you must make sure that they have everything that they need, but you also must make sure they will bring it all back. To do this, pack their things with them. That way they know what all is where. Also, it helps them practice doing so for when they come home. Put labels in all of their clothes, so that they don't get lost. Send a separate bag for dirty clothes and explain to them what it is for. Make sure to send some extra clothes in case they need it. Being outside at camp generally means getting dirty. Make sure your child can handle the bag on their own. This ensures their responsibility for it.

If this is their first time away from home, reassure them that they will be fine without you. If you wish, have them practice spending a night or two at a friend's house so that they get used to being away from home. If they are still uncomfortable, have a friend go with them to camp. Things are a lot less scary when not done alone. Homesickness is very common in kids going to camp, because it is a big step to be away from home for so long. Send them with your blessing, and let them know that homesickness is normal, but soon they will be having too much fun to even think about home. Don't say they can call if they get homesick, because this can hinder their transition into camp life. Tell them they will be fine and go over any questions they might have so they are more comfortable.

So that you aren't completely cut off, send them with paper, pen, and envelopes to write home. Put your address and stamps on the envelopes before your child leaves to ensure it will go to the right place. Make sure to write to them. When you do write, don't mention events/things they are missing while away, because this could trigger homesickness. Tell them how proud you are that they are at camp and being independent. Encourage them to write back and that you look forward to hearing about what they are doing.

Another way to calm those being away nerves is to look through the camp website with your child so that they can see photos and get familiar with where they will be staying. For more comfort, you can see about taking a tour.



Go over some safety tips with them. Make sure they know who to talk to about problems or emergencies. If they already know the staff they will be staying with, make sure to tell them. If not, try to introduce them beforehand so that they don't feel left alone with a complete stranger. For parents, remember that most of these people work with kids/camps for a living, and they know what they are doing.

Practice independent skills well before they leave. Especially for younger kids, parents are generally a large part of their morning/getting ready routine. Make sure they get used to doing these things on their own, including cleaning up after themselves. Hygiene and personal item responsibility are things they must be prepared to do without having you to remind them.

The day that camp gets here, know the drop off schedule 100%. If you know what is supposed to be done, it'll take the nerves off the kids. Make sure you have all of their things and know the guidelines. Are they taking a bus? Are you driving them? Do you take them to their cabin? Where is their cabin? Talk to your event planner to make the goodbye as smooth as possible.



Finally, tell them about your own church camp experiences, if you have any. There's nothing quite as reassuring as hearing from someone who has had the experience. Maybe you could even give them some tips you learned that will make their time a little better.

The last thing you can do for your kids is pray for them while they are gone. We know it is hard not to worry about them and that you want to bring them straight home, but it will be alright. We promise. Here is a prayer to help you get through this time without your little angels.

"Lord God, I pray for my son/daughter today, that he/she may experience Your forgiveness and love. I pray that my child's/children's heart feels Your healing touch. I offer up all the campers and counselors, as well as the volunteers and youth ministers. I pray for their safety and protection and that they may each experience You more deeply in their hearts. Amen."



Rethink Your Recreation



A CRN Resource

Creative Summer Camp Games

One of the best parts of summer camp is the whacky, fun games that you don't get to play anywhere else. There's always the classics (tug of war, freeze tag, obstacle course, etc.), but as the planner, you want to make sure the activities are as fun and memorable as possible. Here's a few of our favorite summer games.

Capture the Glow Stick

Capture the flag is a classic camp game, but have you ever tried playing it in the dark? The rules are the same as the original; divide into 2 teams and get the other team's flag, except in this case, the flag is a glow stick. Designate territories and jail before beginning play. If an enemy team member tags a player while in their territory, the player must go to "jail" until one of their teammates frees them by tagging. Each player also wears a glow stick on each wrist, the color of their "flag", to designate their team and make sure everyone can still be seen to play. The first team to successfully capture the other's "flag" and return it to their territory is the winner.

Full Scale Angry Birds

This game will take some props. Use different sized boxes to make the wall. You will need a lot! The best part is participants will enjoy building it, too. The pigs and birds are made out of balls; 5 large green, 3 small red, 3 small blue, and 1 large yellow. Feel free to paint faces on them. Special tip: use mason jar lids to keep the pigs from rolling away before they can get knocked down. There are two ways to go about launching the birds: simply throw the balls or create your own slingshot launcher (you can find many tutorials for this online). After the first launcher knocks it all down, rebuild the wall and move to the next player.

Slip-n-slide Kickball

This twist on a classic schoolyard game is the perfect way to cool off during the summer. In place of bases, you will need inflatable kids' pools, and for the baselines, a roll of plastic. Set these up just like a kickball field and fill with water. Then the game is played the exact same, except everyone is slipping and sliding trying to get from base to base. Depending on the intensity of the game, you may need to refill the pools a few times.

Water Balloon Relay

It's not summer without water balloons. Get a bucketful and let the race begin. Start by splitting your group into two or more teams (doesn't have to be an even number, but you'll want more than 5 per team). Split each team in half and have them toss a balloon back and forth down the line until it gets to the end. If the balloon breaks, start over. To make sure players don't move too close, paint lines on the ground that they have to stay behind.





Why Your Camp Needs One This Summer



As you prepare for camp season, you are probably busy planning activities the kids will enjoy. In your planning, have you given any thought to who will handle sick or injured campers? It isn't a fun topic, but it is important to the success of your camp. A camp nurse is a great asset. Camp nurses can perform a wide variety of duties that will allow you to remain focused on your camp!

A camp nurse will set up a health center at your camp, and organizes information such as managing health logs, medical forms, health histories, and physical assessment data. If daily medication is a part of your camper's life, the camp nurse will administer the medicine and keep medical records.

If you don't have campers that need daily medication, you will still need first aid supplies. Your camp nurse can provide clean first aid supplies, attend to minor injuries, and be the liaison between parents or family members and camp staff. In a severe case that requires a camper to go to the hospital, the camp nurse can accompany the camper.

A camp nurse can also provide training and counseling. This includes helping with staff orientations and training staff to recognize medical issues. Similarly, campers are provided with a comfortable environment where they can talk about their health issues (sun burn, bug bites, poison oak and all those other camp ailments), feeling homesick, or any other concerns they may have. Not to mention, younger students are used to mom and dad being around to soothe their pain, meaning a trained person on staff is ready to help with the care they also need emotionally in this strange place.

Concerns about a contagious outbreak may not be in the front of your mind, but it is a real possibility. A camp nurse can manage communicable diseases by creating an action plan, should it become an issue at your camp. This can ensure the safety of everyone at camp.

Safety of your camp is very important. A camp nurse can handle all the details related to the overall health of your campers, while your attention can be on the overall camp experience. It is a win-win situation for everyone! This may be a hard position to fill, but campers, staff, and directors will all benefit from having a nurse at camp.



What You Really Need

(And Don't Need) for Summer Camp

The sky is clear. Your bags are packed. It's time for summer camp! There is nothing quite like the excitement of going to camp for the first time. However, often being caught up in that excitement means forgetting a few things. On top of your clothing and basic toiletries, the following items are absolutely essential for campers to make it through a week filled with worship.

What to Bring

1. **Sunscreen** – It's summer, which means kids will be getting plenty of sun. Don't just send them with a bottle. Make sure they know how and when to apply it.
2. **Bug Repellent/Ointment** – With the warm weather, the bugs will be running rampant. It's difficult to have fun outside when you have an itch. For those pesky critters that do bite, bring some bug bite relief cream. You packed toothpaste, right? Dab a little on a bug bite for instant relief!
3. **Writing Supplies** – You may want to take notes during worship time or send a letter home to tell your family about summer camp. Pack plenty of pens, pencils, and a notebook.
4. **Sleeping Bag** – Find out beforehand if linens are provided or not at your camp's property. For most camps, lodging consists of bunkbeds, meaning kids will have to bring blankets and sheets. A sleeping bag can fit nicely on top of the bed without taking up room while traveling.
5. **Umbrella/Poncho** – It may be summer but that doesn't always mean there won't be rain. Since you never know exactly how the weather will play out, it's better to be safe than soaked!
6. **Swimsuit/Beach Towel** – It's hot out there! Even if the property doesn't have a lake or swimming pool, most summer camps have a ton of water activities to cool down.
7. **Reusable Water Bottle** – Beat the heat by staying hydrated with plenty of water.
8. **Shower Caddy** – You have your essential toiletries (i.e. soap, toothpaste, and toothbrush) but don't know how to carry them all. That is where a shower caddy comes in handy!
9. **Flashlight** – Most summer camps have a lot of outdoor activities, like bonfires, even at night. You don't want to be stuck walking around in the dark!
10. **Money** – Who doesn't want a snack from the vending machines or souvenir from the gift shop?
11. **Bible** – The most important item of all! You will definitely need a Bible since worship services, devotionals, and solo prayer times are a key part of summer camp.



What NOT to Bring

1. Clothing with offensive language and/or images
2. Valuable jewelry
3. Expensive electronic devices (i.e. smartphones, tablets, laptops, and gaming systems)
4. Large sums of money as it could be lost or stolen
5. Pets

Tips for Packing

Do you have everything but the kitchen sink? Even with a checklist for what to bring and not bring to your summer camp, some people might not know how to actually pack their belongings for a week! We are here to help. You should consider packing outfits together for each day so you don't have to dig around other clothes in your suitcase or bag. It is also best to roll your clothes instead of folding them to have more space for other items.

When it comes to recreation, pack accordingly. Throw in an extra shirt and shorts if you plan on working up a sweat or taking a dip in the pool. It's additionally helpful to ask about the requirements for adventure recreation. Odds are there will be a dress code to ensure safety of participants. High ropes obstacles, group initiatives challenges, rock climbing, and zip lining are nothing you want to miss out on.

As it is time to head home, make sure you have all your belongings by sticking the checklist inside your suitcase. If you are still wondering what you should bring for summer camp, communicate with your event planner or the property you will be staying at.

For a full list of helpful items to bring, download our Items to Bring Checklist at ChristianRetreatsNetwork.org/resources

