

Pointers For Parents

Help Finding The Right Camp

(NAPSA)—From basketball and horseback riding to the performing arts and cheerleading, there are many different types of camp to choose from. Traditional summer camp is still, by far, the most popular choice for youths of all ages and day camp for teenagers is on the rise. But how do you know when your child is ready to go to camp and how do you find the best match?

Camping experts at the YMCA of the USA offer tips to help parents choose the best camping experience for their child this summer:

- A good place to start when looking for a camp is with the American Camp Association (ACA) or with the Y. The ACA accredits camps across the country to ensure they meet the highest standards. YMCA camps are accredited by the ACA.

- Camp does not have to be expensive. There are camps available in every price range. YMCA camps even offer scholarship assistance.

- On average, many 8-year-olds are ready for resident or “sleep-away camp” and age-appropriate day camps are available for preschool-aged children. Remember, however, each child is ready to leave the nest at his or her own pace.

- Sleep-away camp shouldn't be a child's first time away from home. A sleepover at a friend's or relative's house is an important first step to a longer stay away.



- Decide if you are looking to give your child a vacation from school or if you hope for some real growth in character and self-confidence. Some camps are highly structured, while others offer more time to allow kids to set their own schedules.

- Quiz camp staff on the information described in their materials. Find out how the camp encourages positive behavior and teamwork and how problem behavior is handled. Ask how the camp works with children requiring special diets, medications or accommodations.

- Get references from other families who have attended the camps you are considering.

- Don't forget to include your child in the process, and if possible, plan a visit before making a final decision. Most camps provide tours in the spring as well as once camp is in session. Some even offer family weekends where the family can experience camp together.

To find a YMCA resident or day camp, check out www.ymca.net.