

Checklist to a Camp that Clicks

by Melanie Wagner

Gone are the days when spending the summer at camp meant packing a trunk and bunking in a cabin from May until August. Between family vacations, sports camps and rising camp costs, finding the perfect fit for your child's few special weeks at summer camp takes ample research. Ask yourself these questions before choosing a camp.



Location:

Close to home or a plane ride away? The Parent Trap twins traveled across the country and overseas to go to camp... how far is right for your child?

- Far from home (a plane ride away)
- Same region
- Same state
- Within 100 miles

Setting:

Strong swimmers may prefer a lakeside setting, while mini-mountaineers would rather be in Blue Ridge. Determine your child's preference for physical surroundings.

- Country City
- Lakeside Oceanside
- Mountains Desert

Size and gender:

Small, single-gender camps foster close relationships with fewer friends, while larger, co-ed camps make for more exciting games of capture the flag. Pick your preference.

First choose:

- Small Medium
- Large

Then decide:

- All boys All girls
- Co-ed

Focus:

Does your child want an atmosphere with a single-sport focus or just good old-fashioned summer camp fun? Decide which factors are most important to you and your child.

First think about what daily camp life should include:

- Religion is important in day-to-day camp life
- Academic environment
- Sports-centered setting
- Artistic atmosphere (creative, visual or performing arts)
- Traditional, outdoor camp

Then decide:

- All campers are close to my child's age
- Any age spread is fine, as long as campers are separated based on age
- Any age range is fine

Cost:

Finance camp and a family vacation without breaking the bank this summer.

- When determining cost, first discuss how much you want to spend per week on your child's summer camp experience.
- Explore your options, and break down how much each camp would cost per child, per week.
- Be sure to factor in travel to and from camp, whether you'll need to purchase supplies or uniforms, and the camper-to-counselor ratio for each camp. (If you're spending more on camp, you'll want specialists to teach skills classes).