

PARENTS WITH PREPAREDNESS

## ***Summer Camp Awaits!***

*Your Guide to Packing Smart, Making Friends, Handling Homesickness & Staying Safe*

For Kids Ages 8–12

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# PARENTS WITH PREPAREDNESS

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# Hey, Camp Is Coming!

Something pretty cool is about to happen to you.

You're going to camp.

Maybe you've been before. Maybe this is your first time. Either way, there's always a mix of feelings before camp — excitement, nervousness, a few butterflies, maybe a big question mark about what it's all going to be like.

This ebook is for you. Not for your parents. For you.

It covers four things: what to pack (and what to leave home), what to do if you miss home, how to make new friends, and how to stay safe so nothing ruins your summer.

Read it before you go. Stick it in your bag. Camp is going to be great — and knowing this stuff ahead of time makes it even better.

— The PWP Team

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## CHAPTER 1

# Pack Smart

*"You don't need as much as you think you do."*

Here's the truth about packing: most people overpack, forget one important thing, and bring something they never use. The secret is a good list — made before you start throwing stuff into your bag.

### The Essentials: Don't Leave Without These

- Enough clothes for each day (plus one extra set — things get muddy)
- Underwear and socks — more than you think, trust us
- Pajamas or comfortable sleeping clothes
- Sturdy closed-toe shoes (sneakers, not sandals, for activities)
- Rain jacket or poncho — weather changes fast outdoors
- Sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) and bug spray
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo
- Towel — at least two if there's a pool or lake
- Water bottle with your name on it

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- Flashlight with fresh batteries
  - Any medication you take (given to your camp counselor)
  - Stamps and your home address, if you want to write letters

## Nice to Have

- A book for quiet time or rainy days
- Playing cards or a small game
- A journal or notebook
- A small photo of your family or pet — seriously, it helps
- A reusable bag for dirty laundry



### Label EVERYTHING

Put your name on every single item. Socks, water bottles, towels — all of it. Stuff disappears at camp. Named stuff comes back.

## Leave These Home

Some things don't belong at camp — either because they'll get lost, broken, or cause problems:

- Expensive electronics (phones, tablets, gaming systems)
- Jewelry or anything you'd be sad to lose
- Too much cash — bring a small amount if camp allows it
- Anything that makes you the center of attention in a bad way

If you're not sure whether to bring something, ask yourself: "Would I be upset if this got lost or broken?" If yes, leave it home.



### The night-before check

Pack your bag the night before, not the morning of. The morning of is stressful and you will forget something.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Missing Home Is Normal

*"Almost every kid feels it. The ones who don't talk about it still feel it."*

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Let's be honest about something: homesickness is real, and it's really common. Missing your parents, your bed, your dog, your normal routine — that's not being babyish. That's being human.

The trick isn't to not feel homesick. The trick is to know what to do when it hits.

## What Homesickness Feels Like

It might show up as a stomachache. Or feeling quiet when everyone else is loud. Or waking up in the middle of the night and not knowing where you are for a second. Or just a heavy feeling in your chest that you can't quite explain.

All of that is normal. It usually peaks in the first day or two — and then something happens: you get busy, you make a friend, you do something you didn't know you could do, and it starts to lift.



### Tell someone

If you're really struggling, tell a counselor. That's literally part of their job. You won't get in trouble. You won't look weak. Counselors have helped hundreds of kids through this — let them help you.

## Things That Actually Help

- Stay busy. The best cure for homesickness is doing something — swimming, a game, a craft, talking to someone. Sitting alone makes it worse.
- Write it down. Write a letter home or in your journal. Getting the feeling out of your head and onto paper makes it smaller.
- Make one friend. Just one. A single person you can sit with at meals makes camp feel completely different.
- Give it 48 hours. Homesickness almost always gets better. Most kids who want to go home on day one don't want to leave on day four. Give yourself time.
- Remember why you came. You came to do something. Focus on that thing.

*"The first night I cried a little, but I didn't tell anyone. The next day I tried the rock wall and I got to the top. After that I kind of forgot to be homesick."*

## What NOT to Do

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- Don't call home the first night if you can help it — hearing your parent's voice can reset the homesickness clock and make it harder to settle in. Save it for when you really need it.
  - Don't hide in your cabin. Being alone gives homesickness more room to grow.
  - Don't compare yourself to kids who seem totally fine. Everyone processes differently.

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## CHAPTER 3

# Making Friends at Camp

*"Camp friendships are different from school friendships. They happen faster."*

One of the best things about camp is that everyone is in the same situation: away from home, surrounded by strangers, trying to figure things out. That's actually a great starting point for friendship.

You don't need to be naturally outgoing or funny or popular to make friends at camp. You just need to show up and try a few things.

## Easy Ways to Start

- Use someone's name. Learn it early and use it. "Hey Maya, want to walk over to the dining hall together?" — that alone makes you memorable.
- Ask questions. People love talking about themselves. "Where are you from?" "Have you been to this camp before?" "What activity are you most excited about?" Any of these works.
- Sit with someone who's sitting alone. This is the simplest thing on this list — and the one that means the most.
- Find your activity person. The friend you make at archery might become your best camp friend. Look for people who get excited about the same things you do.
- Be the one who says yes. When someone asks "does anyone want to..." — say yes.



### One is enough

You don't need to be friends with everyone in your cabin. Making even one real friend changes the whole experience. Start there.

## What if You Feel Left Out?

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Sometimes groups form fast and it feels like everyone already has their person. That's not always true — it just looks that way from the outside.

- Find someone else on the edges of a group and start there. They're probably hoping someone will talk to them.
- Join an activity instead of a social circle. It's easier to bond over doing something than just standing around.
- Talk to your counselor privately. A good counselor can help weave you into things without making it awkward.

### If Someone Is Unkind

Most kids at camp are trying their best. But sometimes someone says something mean, or a group excludes you on purpose. If that happens:

- Don't retaliate. Don't match their energy. Walk away.
- Tell a counselor. Unkindness that keeps happening is not something you have to handle alone.
- Remember it says something about them, not about you.

*"I didn't talk to anyone the whole first day. On day two, I asked the girl in the next bunk if she wanted to play cards. We played cards every single night after that."*

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## CHAPTER 4

# Staying Safe at Camp

*"Knowing what to do keeps small problems from becoming big ones."*

Camp is one of the safest places you can be — there are rules, trained counselors, and structure. But knowing some basics means you're never caught off guard.

### Water Safety

Whether it's a pool, lake, or river — water rules are serious rules.

- Always swim in designated areas. Never swim alone or outside the boundaries, even if you're a strong swimmer.
- Know your skill level and stay in the right zone. Nobody thinks less of you for being honest about where you're comfortable.

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- If someone is in trouble in the water: shout for a lifeguard. Throw something they can grab (a towel, a rope, a flotation device). Do not jump in unless you are trained — even strong swimmers can drown trying to save someone who is panicking.
  - The buddy system exists for a reason. Stick with yours.



### **Tell a lifeguard**

If you see something wrong in or near the water — yell for the lifeguard immediately. Don't wait to see if it resolves itself.

## **Outdoors & Trails**

- Stay on marked trails. If you're unsure where you are — stop and wait. Don't keep walking. A counselor will come.
- Never wander off alone. Always tell someone where you're going, even if it's just to the bathroom.
- Watch where you step in rocky or wooded areas — snakes like warm rocks and cool shade. Give wildlife space.
- Wear closed-toe shoes for hikes, even if it's hot. Your feet will thank you.

## **Sunscreen & Bugs**

- Put sunscreen on before outdoor activities, not after. It needs 15–30 minutes to work.
- Reapply after swimming or every 2 hours — whichever comes first.
- Use bug spray in wooded or grassy areas, especially at dusk. Tuck pants into socks on trail hikes to keep ticks out.
- Check for ticks after being outdoors. If you find one, don't pull it — tell a counselor right away.

## **The Most Important Rule: Tell Someone**

This covers everything:

- Feeling sick? Tell a counselor.
- Got hurt, even a little? Tell a counselor.
- Saw something scary or wrong? Tell a counselor.
- Being treated badly by anyone? Tell a counselor.

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You will not get in trouble for speaking up. Counselors are there to help you — that's their entire job. A small thing handled early stays small. A small thing ignored can become a big thing.



### **Trust your gut**

If something feels wrong — even if you can't explain it — you are allowed to say something. That instinct is worth listening to.

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## **You've Got This**

Camp is one of those things that looks scary from the outside and turns into something you never want to leave.

You now know how to pack (don't forget to label everything), what to do when you miss home (tell someone, give it 48 hours, stay busy), how to make a friend (ask one question, use their name, sit next to the person sitting alone), and how to stay safe (tell a counselor — always).

Everything else, you'll figure out as you go. That's kind of the whole point.

Have the best summer.

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## **Parents With Preparedness**

[pwporg.org](http://pwporg.org)

*Raising kids who know what to do.*

