



Summer Social Activities and Your Child

Most parents choose their child's summer activities based on two criteria.

1. **Convenience to the parent's work schedule**
2. **The activity most popular among their child's peer group, in other words, what all the other kids are doing.**

We do not have those simple luxuries. Our children are unique and the choices we make for them have to be as unique as they are. The person who knows your child best is not you. It is your child them self. So start by asking them what they are interested in, how they would like to spend their time. Start a list, and then use some of these guidelines to make the best-informed choice. Hopefully the end result will be a happy social summer for your child and some well deserved rest and peace of mind for you.

Guidelines for Choosing Summer Activities for Your Child

Think about your child and their behaviors in social situations. Think about what skills you would like their summer activities to promote. Consider how they react in social situations and choose accordingly.

- **Structured vs. Free Range Activity** - Does your child respond better to adult supervised structured activities or do they respond better to improvisational peer play? Which would have the more positive impact on your child?
- **Competitive Team vs. Individual Achievement** – Does your child like competition or do their peers intimidate them? Competition is any activity where skills, qualities, or other like characteristics are openly compared to those of others. Does your child like competing against others or do they get more esteem from self-improvement?
- **Creative vs. Physical Activity** – Does your child need to burn energy and move a lot or are they more content to sit and create. Do they like their physical activity to be sports oriented? Do they prefer creative physical activity like dance or karate?
- **Educational vs. Recreational** – this one is a no-brainer to me. It's summer, school is out and kids should be having fun.

Once you have considered these options then you can pick several activates then narrow your choices by investigating how best they suit your child and your family. Some things to consider:

- **Location**
- **Cost** – funding availability
- **Schedule** (all summer activities seem to always coincide with ESY programs)
- **Size of program** – How many kids will be participating? Does your child work better in small or large groups? How large is the area or facility. Do large open areas or small crowded spaces intimidate your child?
- **Insurance coverage**
- **What other types of children are enrolled?**
- **Refund policy** – This is important. If your child simply refuses to participate you may want to look at other options. If a uniform is required ask about holding off on its purchase until you are sure your child is willing.
- **Willingness of staff to make any adaptations to the program for your child**
- **Staff to child ratio**
- **Medical issues** – Does your child have any medical concerns that might impede their participation? Is staff trained and equipped to handle any medical emergencies?
- **Parent participation** – How involved do you expect to be? How involved do they expect or want you to be?
- **Discipline policies** – how do they handle undesirable behavior? Are they willing to work within your child's behavior plan?
- **Age limitations** – Can they be restructured for your child?
- **Rules and Policies** – Make sure you are aware of all regulations regarding the program. Be upfront about any behavior concerns so that you will know where you stand should a problem arise. This would be a good time to discuss the refund policy.
- **What are the requirements for completing or graduating from the program?**
Can special adaptations be made for your child so they can move on with their peer group?

Remember any director or staff that seems too busy to address your concerns probably won't be concerned about your child. Although in most cases your child has a right to be involved in the program of your choosing it will not be a successful, rewarding experience without motivated open-minded staff.



Guidelines for Choosing Summer Camps – Residential or Day Programs

Here are some points to consider when choosing a summer camp program. Unfortunately many camps start sign ups early in the spring so if you have not enrolled in one for this summer it may be too late. But if you start research now you can be first in line for next year.

- **Location** – this is important if there is a possibility you may be called to attend to your child
- **Schedule** (all summer activities seem to always coincide with ESY programs)
- **Cost**
- **Insurance coverage**
- **Refund policy**
- **Size** – how large is the camp? Is your child an eloper? What surrounds the area? Is there a possibility for your child to get lost?
- **Transportation** – do they have transportation available? Are there pick up sites? Are you allowed to self-transport if you choose?
- **What other types of children are enrolled?**
- **Food** – does your child require a special diet? If this is a day program is lunch provided or do you need to pack a lunch? Make sure all staff is aware of any food allergies your child may have.
- **Staff to child ratio** – If this is a camp where most of the children have special needs you may want to be sure the ratio is appropriate. If the camp serves mostly children with typical needs you may want to request one to one staff for your child. Is your TSS permitted to accompany your child?
- **Activities** – are they appropriate for your child? Is your child physically capable or participating? What type of pre-instruction is offered for any activities? Can the activities be adapted to suit your child? Is participation a requirement? Do all activities take place at the campsite or will there be “field trips”? If there are extra excursions what type of transportation is used? Are they suitable to your child?
- **Swimming** – will swimming be involved? What safety measures are in place? Do you need to provide safety equipment?
- **Medical** – is there on site nursing care? Will your child need to have meds administered and if so by who? Is staff trained in CPR and First Aid. Are there

- emergency communication devices? Where is the closest Hospital or medical treatment facility?
- **Accessibility** – Does your child have limited mobility and will the campsite be accommodating to them?
 - **Uniforms and Equipment**
 - **Inside or Outside**
 - **Rain or Shine** – if this is an outside camp does the program continue on inclement weather days? If not how will you be notified of cancellation. Are rain days lost days or are they made up later in the program?
 - **History of program** – how long has it operated? How long had the current director been in charge? Is the camp certified or accredited?
 - **Discipline policies** – how do they handle undesirable behavior? Are they willing to work within your child's behavior plan?
 - **Eating, sleeping and bathing facilities** – are they all suited to your child's needs? Are bathroom facilities available inside of the sleeping quarters?
 - **Toileting** – does your child need assistance in this area and is the program willing to provide staff for this?
 - **Communication policy** – will you be able to communicate with your child or staff during camp hours? Will your child be able to communicate with you?
 - **Age Limitations** – can they be restructured to accommodate your child?
 - **Fears** – is your child afraid of heights, water, or the dark?
 - **Policies on food and packages from home**
 - **Are religious services offered?**
 - **Will your child need any spending money?**

There are numerous websites to direct you in your choices on camps. The United Way website has a very extensive list.

It is very helpful to camp directors to give them as much information about your child as possible. Fill out all forms required and share any and as much extra information as possible. This can only help to insure that your child has a safe happy summer experience.

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