



CHAMPIONS Science Adventures

Summer Camp 101 Tips to Select the Right Camp for Your Child

Selecting the perfect summer camp experience shouldn't cause you sleepless nights! Consider these tips now to ensure a fun filled summer camp experience for you and your family.

- **Establish your family's goals and interests.** Talk with your child about his or her interests. Discuss potential types of camps – sports, science, arts, cooking, etc. and identify those he or she is interested in or would like to learn more about.
- **Identify your needs.** Realistically evaluate your needs for care for your child. Do you need full days, part days, all summer, certain weeks of the summer, etc.? Think about the flexibility of your job situation and the other commitments you may have during the summer. Ask for the program's definition of a 'full day'. Some full day programs only operate between the hours of 9am to 3pm. If you work full-time or have commitments throughout the day, this kind of program may present logistical challenges.
- **Look for camps that present variety and flexibility for your child and for you.** Like adults, most children want some variety in their day, across a week or throughout the summer. Look for programs that have a range of activities, experiences, and types of opportunities. Consider the availability of active and quiet activities, field trips, activities that encourage social interactions with other children, and more. Also, consider the program's ability to be flexible to your needs. Can the program accommodate extra hours, days, or weeks of care should you need them? Is the program flexible to your summer schedule for vacations and other commitments?
- **Balance learning and fun.** Most children think of summer as a break from school and learning. And, certainly summer should present fun filled activities that give children an experience different from their typical school day. At the same time, research shows that summer 'academic slump' in which children lose valuable gains made during the school year, can be combated by choosing a program that incorporates some learning activities into the camp day. These activities should be offered in a way that encourages children and stresses fun while learning, rather than rote drill of academic 'facts.'

- **Remember all domains of development.** Children need daily experiences in all developmental domains – social, emotional, physical, and intellectual. Ideally, look for a summer program that incorporates activities across all of these areas. Not only will children in these types of programs benefit from the variety, they will actually enjoy the program more because it has wide ranging topics and is more interesting over time.
- **Insist on health and safety basics.** Look for programs that are licensed and meet stringent health and safety requirements. Some summer programs do not participate in state or local licensing or regulatory programs based on exemptions as recreational or seasonal offerings. Be warned that these programs may not meet basic health and safety guidelines for teacher to child ratios, safety practices, or health inspections.
- **Visit the program and preview the plans for the summer activities.** Enrolling in a program is best accomplished during a visit to the facility/location and by previewing the program offering. Look for well organized plans of activities, thoughtful preparation, and a safe and inviting environment for your child.
- **Meet the program staff.** Of course you'll want to feel comfortable with the people who will be caring for, instructing, and interacting with your child. Meet the program manager and as many of the staff members as possible. Look for people who are eager to work with this age group of children and who have been trained to meet the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of children throughout a full day of activity. Also, ask about the program's plans for including families and communicating with you about daily and weekly activities.

Learn more about the four different hands on science day camps Champions Science Adventures is hosting this summer at www.discoverchampions.com