

Choosing camp

With so many options, choosing the right camp for your child can be overwhelming, so here are six questions and tips to consider to get you started.

1 Ask your child.

As parents, we are often convinced that we know best what's best for our kids and while this may be true, most times, it might not be a bad idea to engage your child when picking a summer camp. Just be careful to give yourself as much flexibility as you can. Instead of asking for one choice, inquire about a short list of camps that he or she finds enticing. Even if at the end you decide on a camp that wasn't among your child's favorites you would have at least had the chance to see what type of activities he or she gravitates towards.

2 Day or overnight camp?

Think about whether you want to send your child to a resident camp or a day camp. Your decision is likely to depend on the age of your child, their personality and level of independence and your willingness to relinquish control.

3 What is the camp's focus?

There are many different types of summer camps and each of them focuses on one or more activities ranging from horseback riding, archery, swimming, running and other individual and team sports to mathematics, language,

theater, arts and crafts and anything in between. Think about your child's interests and whether you want them to improve a skill that they already possess or if you would like them to be introduced to something completely new to them.

4 How much is it?

Camp fees can vary widely depending on many factors, some of which are its focus, location, services, amenities and even market conditions. If you like a camp, but you think that the price is out of your budget it's an easy way to strike it from your list and move on. Just remember that some camps do offer financial assistance so if you really like the place it might be a good idea to give them a call and ask if there are any programs available that might work for you.

5 Research, research, and, oh, yeah, research.

This will and should take the majority of your time. You should research the camp of your choice very carefully and vet it extensively. How long has the camp been around, what is the camp director's background, what is the staff to campers ratio, how do they handle conflict between campers, how do they vet their staff, what is the percentage of kids that returned the following year, can they give you references? These are just some of the questions that you should ask when talking to a prospective camp. Look online for other question ideas and also try to find what other parents are saying about the camps on your short list.

6 Visit the camp.

Just as is with choosing a good childcare, you should visit the camp facilities and meet the people that run the camp as well as the camp counselors in person. Talk with them, ask questions, take time to get to know them a little better and see if you like their attitude, demeanor and personality.

These are just a few of the many ways to approach your summer camp search. The most important point, though, is to be open minded yet careful and to gather as much information about the camp of your choice as possible before committing. Good luck!

