How To Select Summer Camps

Planning your family's summer can be like putting together a 500 piece puzzle. You need to figure out family vacations, plan around any pre-arranged commitments, coordinate activities with friends, and schedule it all so each of your children can do what they love, all while you make sure they get the most out of the time.

Summer camp is on most parents summer wish list. If it's on yours, its worth the investment. To help the planning process, Kidfully, in partnership with Edventure More, has put together this Camp Selection Guide to help make your summer planning challenge, a bit less daunting. This camp guide contains information on:

- Value of the camp experience
- Camp readiness
- Camp types
- Planning your kids' camp calendar
- Getting the most out of camp

Value of The Camp Experience

There are a few important things to know about kids and about summer camp:

https://www.kidfully.com/guides/how-to-select-summer-camps
Summer provides a unique opportunity to cultivate the curiosity, confidence and kindness kids need to become life long learners and successful adults. According to The Education Foundation: “Informal activities at camps, or with families.....cultivate such things as reading for pleasure and experimenting out of sheer curiosity.” The flow of curiosity that can happen with enriching summer experiences leads to exploration, discovery, pleasure, repetition, mastery, new skill development, confidence, self esteem, and ultimately more exploration.

According to Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education: “We could do lots of creative things in the summer, such as summer camps and enrichment programs. The more time we have with students the better they are going to do.”

If you do the math from the time your child is in kindergarten – 12th grade, you’d see that your child spends 10 weeks per year or 120 weeks in total being on summer vacation. Since each school year is 40 weeks, summertime really equals a total of 3 years of schooling - a large amount of time that no parent wants to waste and that every parent wants to plan for.

Camp Readiness

You know camp is a good idea but you also want to make sure your child is ready. Here are a few things to consider:

- How does your child like to spend their time?
- Is your child comfortable being away from home?
- Will your child be able to listen and sit during camp activities requiring more focus?
- How long can they handle being separated from you?

Summer camp can actually be a great way to prepare your child for when they go to school, teach them how to socialize and get them used to being away from you and home for longer stretches.

Camp Types

In planning which camp to send your children to, there are a number of factors to consider, the first of which is camp type. These are some options:

GENERAL

These camps offer a little bit of all categories such as sports, arts & crafts, games, and provide a well-rounded experience for campers.

Las Lomitas Summer... (/providers/las-lomitas-summer-program-atherton)
5.0 ★★★★★ (4)
📍 Atherton
髽 How far? (/signup)

(/providers/las-lomitas-summer-program-atherton)

Steve & Kate's Ca... (/providers/steve-kate-s-camp-san-carlos-san-carlos)
4.0 ★★★★☆ (6)
📍 San Carlos
髽 How far? (/signup)

(/providers/steve-kate-s-camp-san-carlos-san-carlos)
Camp Edmo (Los Al...) (/providers/camp-edmo-los-altos-los-altos)

4.0 ★★★★☆ (1)

- Los Altos
- How far? (/signup)

More ideas:

day camp (/providers/search?query%5Bterm%5D=day+camp&query%5Btype%5D=tag)

adventure & outdoors camp (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Adventure+%26+Outdoors)

san mateo parks & rec (/providers/search?query%5Bterm%5D=san+mateo+parks+%26+rec&query%5Btype%5D=tag)

san carlos parks & rec (/providers/search?query%5Bterm%5D=san+carlos+parks+%26+rec&query%5Btype%5D=tag)

palo alto parks & rec (/providers/search?query%5Bterm%5D=palo+alto+parks+%26+rec&query%5Btype%5D=tag)

mountain view parks & rec (/providers/search?query%5Bterm%5D=palo+alto+parks+%26+rec&query%5Btype%5D=tag)

SPORS

These either combine related activities, i.e. water sports, field sports...or can provide a more in depth experience into one, i.e. volleyball.

Hi-Five Sports Cl... (/providers/high-five-sports-clubs-menlo-park)

5.0 ★★★★★ (1)

- Menlo Park
- How far? (/signup)

Silicon Valley Te... (/providers/silicon-valley-tennis-academy-san-carlos-san-carlos)

4.5 ★★★★☆ (4)

- San Carlos
- How far? (/signup)

Peninsula Communi... (/providers/peninsula-community-center-redwood-city)

4.4 ★★★★☆ (7)

- Redwood City
- How far? (/signup)
More ideas:

- multiple sports camp
- basketball camp
- soccer camp
- tennis camp
- swimming camp
- horse camp
- chess camp
- martial arts camp
- volleyball camp

ACADEMICS

Focusing on one or multiple forms of study, these camps extend learning during the summer.

- The Little Scholars
  5.0 ★★★★★
  - San Mateo
  - How far? (/signup)

- Charles Armstrong...
  5.0 ★★★★★
  - Belmont
  - How far? (/signup)
Russian School of... (/providers/russian-school-of-mathematics-san-mateo-san-mateo)

3.0 ★★★☆☆ (1)

- San Mateo
- How far? (/signup)

More ideas:

- multiple academics camp (/providers/search?query$Bterm%5D=multiple+academics+camp&query$Btype%5D=tag)
- math camp (/providers/search?query$Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query$Bterm%5D=Math)
- computers & coding camp (/providers/search?query$Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query$Bterm%5D=Computers+%26+Coding)
- science camp (/providers/search?query$Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query$Bterm%5D=Science)
- writing camp (/providers/search?query$Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query$Bterm%5D=Writing)
- reading camp (/providers/search?query$Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query$Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query$Bterm%5D=Reading)
- AP Prep (/providers/search?query$Bterm%5D=AP+Prep&query$Btype%5D=category)
- Robotics (/providers/search?query$Bterm%5D=Robotics&query$Btype%5D=category)
- SAT & ACT Prep (/providers/search?query$Bterm%5D=SAT+%26+ACT+Prep&query$Btype%5D=category)

SPECIALTY

These camps have one specific area of interest, for example art, theatre, dance, gaming, etc.

Professional Ball... (/providers/professional-ballet-school-belmont)

5.0 ★★★★★ (2)

- Belmont
- How far? (/signup)

TechKnowHow Summe... (/providers/techknowhow-computer-and-robotics-camps-menlo-park)

5.0 ★★★★★ (1)

- Menlo Park
- How far? (/signup)
TheatreWorks Dram... (providers/theatreworks-drama-school-redwood-city)
4.0 ★★★★☆ (1)
📍 Redwood City
籥 How far? (/signup)

More ideas:

- art camp (/providers/search?query%5Bterm%5D=art+camp&query%5Btype%5D=tag)
- acting & theatre camp (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Acting+%26+Theatre)
- lego camp (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Lego)
- cooking camp (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Cooking)
- dance camp (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Dance)
- public speaking (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Public+Speaking)
- chinese (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Chinese)
- public speaking (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Public+Speaking)
- knitting & sewing (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Knitting+%26+Sewing)
- movie making (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Movie+Making)
- digital media (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Digital+Media)
- photography & video (/providers/search?query%5Bfull_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bhalf_day_camps%5D=1&query%5Bovernight_camps%5D=1&query%5Bterm%5D=Photography+%26+Video)

SLEEPAWAY

Whether it is for a week or a whole summer, the sleepaway camp experience is quintessentially American and offers kids an opportunity to face new challenges and take positive risks in a supportive environment.

Camp Unalayee (/providers/camp-unalayee-hayfork)
5.0 ★★★★★ (1)
📍 Hayfork
籥 How far? (/signup)

https://www.kidfully.com/guides/how-to-select-summer-camps
Knowing your child, what they like to do and the outcomes you want them to take away from summer, will help you to determine which type or individual camps are are best for your family.

For more ideas, check out our Sleepaway Camp Guide (/guides/best-sleepaway-camps-for-sf-bay-area-kids)

Planning Your Kids' Camp Calendar

These are some of the other questions you'll want to get answers to before you choose a camp:

- **Location** – Is it convenient?
- **Schedule** – Do the times work? Is after care offered?
- **Options** - Can both my younger and older child attend?
- **Staff** – Are they qualified?
- **Safety** – Is there at least an 8:1 ratio of campers to staff?
- **Friends** – If my children don’t attend camp with friends, how does the camp help children develop new friendships?
- **Lunch** – Is it provided or available for purchase?
- **Return Rate** – Do a high percentage of campers return?
- **Owners/Founders** – Are they involved?
- **Quality** – How is my child spending their day? Are they just keeping busy or learning things that will stay with them?
- **Value** – Are there discounts offered such as early bird, first time camper, multiple week, sibling and/or referral?

Below we’ve provided two samples of tools that you can use for planning summer for your family. The first is a Summer Calendar. We’ve put in just four weeks but you can add as many as you’d like to your version. Use this to plot out the givens: your family reunion, swim lessons, birthday parties, etc. Then block out any time you want to have at home as a family or sightseeing locally. The weeks that are left are the ones that are free for camp. Since many kids prefer to attend camp with their friends, why not share your Summer Calendar with friends too? Each family can fill out their summer plans in a column and this sheet then becomes a helpful tool to find common weeks of camp attendance, to find carpool opportunities and more.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Your Kid</th>
<th>Friend's Kid 1</th>
<th>Friend's Kid 2</th>
<th>Friend's Kid 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Pacific Coast Kids Lego</td>
<td>Pacific Coast Kids Lego</td>
<td>Critter Camp</td>
<td>Critter Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Skyhawks Multisport Camp</td>
<td>Skyhawks Multisport Camp</td>
<td>Skyhawks Multisport Camp</td>
<td>Skyhawks Multisport Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>Mad Science</td>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>Turner Baseball Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Challenger Soccer Camp</td>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>Emerald Hills Jr. Golf Camp</td>
<td>Challenger Soccer Camp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Get the template (https://docs.google.com/a/kidfully.com/spreadsheets/d/1a_b2T2VISBXjSCnzk-hWycG2OOPOryI3Z5oJmrfv7w/edit#gid=751294157)

The second tool, our sample Summer Planning Worksheet, is for scheduling the best mix of camps for your child. This is where you need to consider their personality, interests and what skills you want your child to take away from camp this summer. Fill in the camps on your list and put their name in each box that applies.
Get the template (https://docs.google.com/a/kidfully.com/spreadsheets/d/1a_b2T2VISBXjSCnzk-gWycG2OOPOry13Z5oJmrFv7w/edit#gid=0)

You should now be all set for summer. One more thing, before your child goes to camp next summer, be sure to take a look at the additional suggestions below to help your child get the most from their summer experience.

**Getting The Most Out of Camp**

Learning doesn’t have to stop after the camp day. Here are a number of ways that parents can help their children continue the learning at home next summer:

- **Read the handouts the camp provides.** They often tell you what your camper did that day and provide a good basis for questions to ask at the dinner table.
- **Look at resources related to the camp topic.** If your camp doesn’t already provide resources, do a google search or take out books from the library on topics your child finds interesting.
- **Like your child’s camp on Facebook.** It’s often a great way to see camp photos or get any camp news.
- **Communicate with your Camp Director.** If there’s anything you feel could make your child’s experience better, let the Camp Director know.
- **Respond to camp surveys.** Most camps use all of the input they receive from surveys to improve their programs and service. Camp staff also love reading comments and hearing camper stories!

Want to help other parents easily find the best summer camps in their local area?

https://www.kidfully.com/guides/how-to-select-summer-camps
We worked closely with our community to create this guide. Share your thoughts with us so that we can continue to improve it and keep it up to date.

How do we select what appears on our guide? Generally, we look at the reviews received and the ones with the most reviews and highest average rating will be featured.

Community Contributors

In collaboration with:

[edventure more](http://www.edventuremore.org/)

This is a living, breathing resource for all parents. Want to help make this better?

Contribute [feedback]

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