





## Summer Camp “Must Haves”

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**Story by Cynthia Darling**

As kids prepare to head off to camp, parents can find themselves with long “to do” lists. Barista Kids has consulted the experts and compiled a list of the summer camp “must haves” as well as a list of what’s best left at home.

Parents preparing to send their kids to overnight camp need to pack for many different possible scenarios. Laura Nulman, Outreach Coordinator at [REI of East Hanover](#) offers practical advice. Whatever parents do, Nulman says, “Don’t skimp on the rain gear. Invest in a good rain jacket. Let’s face it. It’s going to rain, and kids will thank you when they find themselves well-prepared for those soggy days.”

With that in mind, Nulman continues, “Don’t load up on cotton clothing. Parents should send kids to camp with quick-dry clothing. Cotton will take a long time to dry. If kids are wet and the air gets cold, it’s a slippery slope for kids in terms of getting sick.” Nylon pants with zip away legs for instant shorts are great for keeping water away from the skin, “just as long as kids don’t lose the zip away bottoms!” she laughs.

Nulman also stresses that kids should have a solid hydration system. “When kids are better hydrated, they’re happier and having more fun.” While packing a water bottle that kids will be able to keep with them at all times is a good idea, she alternatively recommends the [Squirt Hydration Pack](#). Kids are likely to drink much more when wearing the pack with the sippable tube than when simply carrying a water bottle.

Nulman invites the public to her store’s [Family Camping Basics](#) event, to be held on July 11. She will be showcasing many of the items kids need for a great camp experience. In addition to the above items, any boxes or containers that will help kids keep track of their belongings in the cabin are useful. Kids will, after all, be setting up their own home away from home, and having control over their space is paramount. Shower caddies that hold shampoo and toothbrushes are a camp standby. Parents should pack stationery for writing those letters home. And, a lap desk that provides a hard surface for kids to write on while sitting in their bunks is available at most bookstores and retailers.

While the list of items for sleep away camp can run several pages, kids going off to day camp are often told to bring as little as possible. Says James Goodger, Branch Director of the [Montclair YMCA](#) and Camp Administrator for [Camp at the Lake](#), “Whatever kids bring to camp, they are most likely going to lose.” For these day campers, then, less is more. He advises that parents label everything in several places.

Todd Rothman, Director of [Deerkill Day Camp](#) in Suffern, NY echoes Goodger’s caution about bringing too much to day camp. “When thinking about what to send, parents have to consider what not to send. This includes [Silly Bandz](#), which really prove to be a distraction and may result in some campers feeling left out.”

He also notes that most camps require leaving all electronics at home. “One of the truly unique aspects of summer camp is being able to leave the world behind and learn more about yourself and those around you with personal contact in a group setting. Electronics only serve to provide an obstacle to this benefit.”

As far as what that leaves for kids to bring with them? Says Rothman, the two most important things for kids to bring are [sunscreen](#) and sneakers. “Typically a spray sunscreen works best and counselors should re-apply during the day. As for footwear, crocs, while comfortable, really are not an adequate substitute for sneakers when participating in any sport. Camp is the perfect excuse parents need for ensuring their children trade in their crocs or flip-flops for sneakers.”

Still undecided about where to send your kid to camp? Check out our comprehensive lists:

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What are your “can’t live without” items on the camp packing list?

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