



ARNOT FOREST CAMP

A Primitive Pursuits Camp in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension

For First Timers at Sleepaway: Tips for Parents

Selecting a camp and preparing for the summer is an exciting process for the entire family. You may have as many questions about this process as you have reasons for giving your camper the incredible gift of a summer at Arnot Forest Camp. This section is intended to be a resource for your family, especially families new to overnight camp, as you count down the start to camp. A few tips on preparing for camp, besides how many t-shirts to bring:

Build Positive Expectations

Please do not tell your camper, you will take them home if they do not like camp. This prevents most children from making the effort it takes to overcome missing home. When they experience the normal discomfort of getting used to a new place, they can think of nothing, but their parents' promise to take them home, and they focus on this rather than making the adjustment. This can sabotage the camp experience before it begins.

We have found that the expectation that your camper will remain for the entire session is helpful in making camp a success. The message to your camper should be that spending time away from home is an important part of growing up, and that even as it is designed to be great fun, it is also a life skill to be motivated to complete.

The more accurate a picture of camp life your camper has, the less foreign it seems when they arrive and the more quickly they adjust. Children should know that they will be part of a group, that living quarters will be rustic, that they will share responsibility for keeping their living areas clean, that there are scheduled activities they will be part of, etc. If your child asks a question you can't answer, call us and we'll be happy to help.

Importance of complete information

It is imperative that camp have complete, accurate information about any emotional, behavioral, medical, or physical situations your camper may be working with. The withholding of such information inhibits our ability to serve your camper effectively. Disclosure, on the other hand, significantly increases your camper's chances for success and happiness at camp. We take confidentiality very seriously and take measures to protect your camper's information.

Missing Home

Most children who go away from home for the first time experience some degree of missing home. It is very natural and very real. Your camper is likely to experience it, even if they are characteristically independent and outgoing. In case of missing home, we will work very hard to help them overcome it. Most children who leave camp before the end view their early departure as a failure; it can have a negative impact on their self-esteem and teach withdrawal as a response to adversity. Camp has an enormous store of techniques to address missing home; with your support, the likelihood that we will achieve positive results is extremely high.

So, if your camper writes you a letter saying or implying that they're missing home, please call and we'll work together with you and let you know what is *happening now*. Very quickly, a sad letter usually gives way to proud tales of adventure, fun and success!

A Few Other Tips for Parents:

- Encourage your camper's independence throughout the year, simulating what the camp environment may look and feel like.
- Involve the camper in the camp decision making process

- Have your camper pack a “personal” item from home such as a stuffed animal

Saying Goodbye on the First Day.

You may feel very sad at the moment you say goodbye. At the same time, it is important to focus on what is best for your camper. Here are some suggestions:

- Express your love.
- Hold back any tears until you’re out of sight.
- Be positive about the camp experience - the more confidence you express, the better your camper’s outlook is apt to be.

Strictly as a matter of logistics, we ask that you keep goodbyes short when dropping off. Long goodbyes make it hard to keep things moving and end up being difficult for others and, in many cases, your campers as well.