

2026 Primitive Pursuits Parent Handbook for Day Camps

Updated: 11/2025

(subject to change)

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Community Agreements - please discuss this with your child:

At Primitive Pursuits, we strive to provide meaningful, safe, fun programs for kids. We do our best to support kids' physical, mental, and emotional needs in a variety of challenging and exciting environments. In order to do this well, all staff and participants need to understand and agree to some basic community agreements,

Community Agreements are given to families upon registration before the program begins.

Caregivers are asked to share and discuss these with their child before the first day of the program.

RESPECT EACH OTHER

- Be kind, in word and action. Name calling, swearing, put downs, and threatening language/motions are not acceptable.
- Keep your hands to yourself—unless part of an activity, keep respectful space between you and other participants, as well as their property.
- Enjoy each other and the experience!

RESPECT YOURSELF

- Stay with your group and respect additional guidelines given by your instructors.
- Do not engage in activities that could injure yourself or others.
- Ask for what you need—be clear about what that is and then let an instructor or fellow participant know how they can help.
- Enjoy yourself and the experience!
- Wear the proper gear- this will help you have a much better experience!

RESPECT THE EARTH

- Take care of the land and our resources at 4-H acres and our other sites.

- Leave an area in as good or better condition than you found it. Be sure to put all food packaging back in your packs to be carried out with you each day.
- Enjoy your time outside on this land!

Other ground-rules and specifics:

- Stay on the ground, meaning: no tree climbing or swimming. Climb only to the height of your waist. Our insurance requires that we not climb trees, or anything else that puts us higher than our waists. We definitely encourage tree climbing, just not while campers are with us.
- Stay with the group - instructors need to know where you are at all times. Ask permission to go to bathrooms or leave the group for any reason.
- Sticks are great! Stick fighting or threatening another is never okay.
- Plants are great! And some are poisonous or cause allergic reactions. Don't eat anything wild unless it has been examined, identified as edible, and an instructor has said it's okay to eat.
- Listen to and follow safety instructions from instructors for all activities.
- Come to instructors for support as soon as a conflict comes up.

Ground Rules are non-negotiable. They require both intentional awareness and good decision making.

Consequences for breaking Community Agreements

FIRST INCIDENT:

Participant will get a reminder from their Instructor and the instructor will give them an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the community agreements. The instructor will inform the participant's caregiver of the behavior.

SECOND INCIDENT:

An instructor will let the participant know that their actions are not meeting our behavioral expectations. The instructor may call the participant's caregiver and ask them to come and pick up the participant early from the program. A 'Participation Agreement' may be created to be sure all parties understand what will be expected moving forward.

THIRD INCIDENT:

An instructor will call the participant's caregiver and ask them to come and pick them up from the program early. The participant will not be able to attend the program until a 'Participation Agreement' has been signed outlining the expectations of the program. Instructors may ask to have a meeting between Primitive Pursuits staff and the participant's caregiver to discuss behavior in future situations in order to meet the Primitive Pursuits Community Agreements.

Participant may be removed from the program if behavior continues after the Participation Agreement is signed. If this happens, no refund will be given

How Your Child May Experience Camp - please discuss with your child:

1. Staff will wear name tags and will introduce themselves to campers. Staff will also help campers introduce themselves to their camp group, and may play name games to encourage campers to learn each other's names and begin building friendships.
 - a. We encourage you to explore our [staff page](#) on our website to learn more about our team of exceptional summer staff.
2. Campers and staff are expected to uphold the Primitive Pursuits Community Agreements: respect yourself, respect others, respect the earth, and stay with the group. These Community Agreements guide all interactions and activities your child will experience at camp. Staff will discuss these expectations with their camper groups, and will use the Community Agreements in addressing any behaviors or conflicts that may arise during the camp week.
3. Lunch items should be ready to consume without needing heating. While we sometimes have fires during lunch, we can not ensure that campers will be able to heat lunch items. We are not able to provide refrigeration for camper snacks and lunch, we suggest using ice packs and an insulated lunch box if needed.
 - a. Due to the active nature of our programs, campers need a lot of food to give them enough energy to play, hike, and run through the woods for the entire day. Be sure to pack plenty of food for your camper(s) - at least 2 more food items than what you would normally pack for a school lunch is a good starting point. A typical camp day includes designated mid-morning snack and lunch times, and campers are encouraged to eat a snack when they are hungry throughout the day. Staff will be role modelling this important aspect of respecting themselves (one of our community agreements).
 - b. Be sure to send your camper with a water bottle(s) that can hold at least 1 liter/32oz.
4. Be sure to look over our summer to-bring lists (page 3-4, "summer to-bring list") and send your camper with the necessary items each day. Even though all items on the to-bring lists are not necessarily used every day (for example, a raincoat), it is important for campers to be prepared for the unexpected. Staff will role model being prepared with proper gear. Primitive Pursuits reserves the right to send campers home, without a refund, if it is determined that insufficient gear poses a safety risk to the camper.
 - a. Please note that items do not need to be purchased new, and thrift stores have many affordable items; if access to necessary gear is a barrier to participation, please contact us.
5. While masks are no longer required, campers who chose to wear masks will be supported in doing so.

Summer To-Bring List:

While we have an indoor space to use in emergencies, please be aware that – rain or shine – we will be outside for the majority of our time together. It is therefore essential that each child comes prepared with the appropriate clothing and enough food to have a fun day.

If your child arrives at camp without the proper gear, our staff may determine that it is not safe for them to stay and they will be sent home (no refund will be issued).

If possible, please label ALL items with your child's name.

What to bring?

- Weather appropriate and **layered clothing** that can get wet and/or muddy. Even on a hot day, children need a **warm, non-cotton layer** in case it rains or they get cold. Cotton steals away body heat when wet and takes a long time to dry. Even in hot weather, **long pants** are good to wear as they can protect legs from poison ivy, mosquitoes, and ticks. **Please pack extra dry layers** in a sealed plastic bag in your child's backpack. Refer to our [**Weather Dressing Chart**](#) for more information on how to dress for all kinds of weather.
- **Socks**, preferably thin wool or a synthetic (like polyester or polypropylene). Please avoid sending your child in cotton socks especially if the forecast calls for chilly and/or wet weather. **Pack extra socks** in a plastic bag in your child's backpack.
- **Durable rain gear**, including a waterproof jacket and pants, or suit, along with rain boots.
- **Footwear** that lets your child run around, splash in the creek and also hike through the woods. In warm and dry weather, send your child in **sturdy and durable shoes or hiking boots** but **also** pack shoes they can wear in the creek (**rain boots or close-toed water shoes/sandals with a back strap, such as Keen sandals.**) **Please no flip-flops or Crocs; open-toed sandals are not recommended either.** In wet weather, your child should wear **rain boots or outdoor sandals that can get wet**. Refer to our [**Weather Dressing Chart**](#) for more information on footwear.
- **Snacks and lunch*** in an easy-to-carry container (like Tupperware or a lunchbox) that can fit in a backpack. Heating food on a campfire may NOT be an option this year; please do not pack food that would rely on a fire to be cooked.
- **Water bottle(s)** that can hold about 1 liter/32 oz.
- **Small, non-breakable heat-safe cup** for drinking wild tea.
- **Sunhat** (like a baseball cap) to keep cool and protect your child's face from the sun.
- **Sunscreen and/or bug repellent** that will be kept in your camper's backpack.
- **Small backpack** to hold your child's gear that fits well and is easy for them to carry. Backpacks with zippers and padded straps are best.

Optional Items

- Field guides
- Primitive crafts or tools
- Bandanas
- For campers 8 years and older: a fixed-blade carving knife with a secure sheath. Knives must be checked in with an instructor during drop-off/check-in.

What NOT to bring?

- Folding knives and other potentially hazardous items.
- Cell phones and other electronic devices are not recommended. If you must send your child with a cell phone, it must stay in the participant's bag out of sight with the ringer turned off during the program so as not to disrupt other campers.

- Pokemon or other trading cards, as they distract from the program and often create conflict and can easily be damaged or lost.
- Do not bring gum. Gum is a choking hazard in such an active program, and it creates litter.
- Sentimental items that can easily become dirty, damaged, or lost. We understand that children like to bring items from home such as a stuffed animal for comfort, but due to the nature of our outdoor programs there is a high chance that these kinds of items may be damaged or lost.
- Money or valuable items that may be damaged or lost.

If possible, please label all items with your child's name.

While bringing snacks/treats for the whole group is a nice gesture, in order to account for food allergies and dietary restrictions please do not bring items intending to be shared unless you have confirmed this beforehand with your camper's instructor.

Please note that it is not necessary to purchase any of the items above as new. Check out local thrift stores or ask family and friends for hand-me-downs. If you are looking for new gear, below is a list of some of our favorite brands, some of which are available locally (Ithaca, NY).

For rain gear- [L.L Bean](#) , [Puddlegear](#) , [Biddle & Bop](#), [Polarn O. Pyret](#)

For rain boots- [The Original Muck Boot Company](#) (can be found at Agway), [Bogs](#) (sold at Fontanas), [Kamik](#) , [L.L. Bean](#)

For other gear- REI, L.L. Bean, [Mama Goose](#)

Dropping Off your Child at Camp:

1. Drop-off times will be staggered based on camp (see "Course Level"):
 - a. 8:45-9:00 Pathfinders, Advanced and Specialty Camps
 - b. 9:00-9:15 Forest Village and Forest Explorers Camps
 - c. 9:00-9:15 Growing Wild Camp
 - d. 8:45-9:15 Travel Camps (subject to change)

**For families with campers in multiple age groups, we will be in communication before your camp week about which time slot to pick up your campers.
2. At all locations, drivers can expect to be directed where to stop by staff.
 - a. Dropping off at 4-H Acres: Drivers will be directed to use the large driveway loop for drop-off and pick-up. Drivers will remain in their cars and a staff member will meet them at their car to begin the check-in process.
 - i. Please note: There will be designated parking spots available if further conversation with camp staff is required.
 - b. Dropping off at CCE Office: Drivers should utilize the street parking available around the CCE Office (Dey St., Franklin St., Willow Ave., and W Lincoln St. are closest) and walk to the drop-off area with their camper(s). Staff will meet drivers and their campers in the garden area (accessible via Willow Ave and Dey St.) to begin the check-in process. Please do not park in the CCE parking lot, as spaces are limited and reserved for office staff. Drivers must walk with their camper(s) to the drop-off area.
3. Caregivers will be met by a staff member who will check in your camper. If your camper is bringing a knife or medication(s) to camp, please inform the staff member checking in your camper.
 - a. A note about medications: Any medications sent with your camper, including over-the-counter medications like ibuprofen and benadryl, must be accompanied by a signed doctor's note detailing dosage and time to be administered. In accordance with TCHD regulations, any and all medications must be checked in with camp staff and kept in a secure location until administered. If you have any questions about sending medications with your camper, please contact the office.

Picking Up Your Camper:

1. Campers will stay in their cohorts during pick-up and have a staggered departure in a similar format to drop off:
 - a. 12:45-1:00 Growing Wild
 - b. 3:00-3:15 Forest Village and Forest Explorers Camps
 - c. 3:15-3:30 Pathfinders, Advanced and Specialty Camps
 - d. 3:30-3:45 Travel Camp pick up (subject to change)
2. For families with campers in multiple age groups, we will be in communication before your camp week about which time slot to pick up your campers. Growing Wild campers will need to be picked up separately from other campers due to the difference in end times.
3. Caregivers will pick up while staying in their vehicles. Campers will be brought to their caregiver's car.

Camper Illness Policy:

Protecting the health of our families is our highest priority. We are continuously modifying our camper illness policy in response to ongoing Tompkins County Health Department (TCHD) guidelines. If your camper has any of the following symptoms associated with an illness, not otherwise explained (for example, by allergies, a recent physical injury, new medication, etc), then they should not come to camp. If your child is exhibiting any of the following symptoms, they may be sent home at the discretion of the Health Director and/or Camp Director for the health and safety of our camp community.

Symptoms of common illnesses include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Fever of 100°F or above
2. Persistent Cough, Sore throat or difficulty breathing
3. Repeated chills and/or shaking
4. Muscle pain
5. Headache
6. Newly acquired loss of taste or smell
7. Significant congestion and/or runny nose
8. Nausea, diarrhea, and/or vomiting
9. Fatigue (not otherwise explained)

Your camper may return to camp after having the above symptoms if they have been symptom-free for 24 hours AND Fever-free for 72 hours. If your camper tested positive for COVID-19, they may return to camp after a negative COVID-19 test result.

*****We rely on families to use their best judgement when deciding to send their child to camp each day.*****

Vaccine-Preventable Disease Exposure Response:

If there is a confirmed case of a vaccine-preventable disease (COVID-19, flu, MMR, DTAP, etc.) of someone who has been at camp in the last four days (or following current protocol from the Tompkins County Health Department), Primitive Pursuits will communicate immediately with Tompkins County Health Department. Primitive Pursuits will clean and disinfect all areas that could have been exposed. Additionally, Primitive Pursuits will maintain confidentiality of the camper or staff member as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

If your camper has a confirmed case of a vaccine-preventable disease and has attended camp at Primitive Pursuits within 4 days, please contact our office as soon as possible so that we may begin our exposure response protocol. We will maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

Updating Camper Health Histories:

Please take a moment to update your child's camper health history and complete all required registration forms. Within the camper health form, please add any additional information that you think would be useful for camp staff to know to best support your child. The more information that you provide, the better equipped staff will be to support your child and their success at camp!

Access your Account [here](#).

Camp Store:

Prior to your child's week at camp, you will be notified of how the camp store will be operating this summer. In the event of an in-person camp store, your camper must be checked out and in the care of their parent/guardian before visiting the camp store.

Please note: as mentioned above (page 4, "what not to bring"), campers should not be sent to camp with money or valuables

Inclement Weather:

1. In the case of thunderstorms, camps at the 4-H location will seek shelter in the pole barn. Other camp locations will also have a designated thunderstorm protocol.
2. If severe and prolonged thunderstorms or other weather events (such as air quality) that may compromise the safety of campers and staff are in the forecast, it is possible we may make the difficult decision to cancel camp that day.
3. If we do cancel camp because of weather, we will make every effort to notify the primary account holder by 8:00 am that morning.
 - a. If you have any questions regarding refunds and cancellations, please refer to our [program policies](#) on our website.

Questions or Concerns?

We encourage families to reach out to us with your questions, concerns, or feedback!

Email: primitivepursuits@cornell.edu

Office: 607-272-2292 Ext. 261