

Getting Ready for Camp for the FIRST TIME!

A big factor in your child having a good camp experience can be the preparation that goes into this important week in his life. We have some thoughts and suggestions for you to consider as you prepare for camp.



-Become familiar with LFR camp activities -

Fear of the unknown is usually the biggest worry for children attending camp. Practicing a typical day at camp may provide some reassurance and self-confidence. Be sure to practice anything which your child may need to know but not be used to, walking after dark with a flashlight, making the bed, brushing teeth, placing laundry in a laundry bag, going to the bathroom with the toiletries kit, and showering independently. Talk to your child about camp and what it's all about. Watch the videos on our website under "Videos and Publications" (<http://www.lakeforestranch.com/>). While you can't prepare your child for everything, you can give him some idea of what to expect. However, all recreation activities are optional.

Be careful with promises -

As parents we often make little promises to our children in order to alleviate their fears. It can be devastating to a camper if those promises aren't met. Some examples:

-Don't tell your child you will talk to him on the phone.

-Don't tell him it won't rain and that there are no bugs.

-Don't tell your child you'll come pick him up if he doesn't like camp.

Instead of making promises, encourage them to be confident in themselves while at camp.

Mail and Care packages -

Mail/Care packages will need to be sent the week before to ensure your child gets it while at camp. You might want to pack extra for everyone in the cabin to share so no one is left out. Campers can buy stamps and stationery in the "Trading Post" (camp store) and the mail box is in the Recreation Hall just outside the "Trading Post"; camper mail and e-mail will be given out each evening. Campers will not be able to send email while at camp.

- Packing -

We know it's tough to pack way in advance, but if you can pack earlier rather than later it is better for your child. Rushing to find the right things and frantically packing the night before gives your child a sense that he is not yet ready for camp. Don't buy a brand-new wardrobe. Children, especially first-timers, will also find "old favorites" reassuring when away from home. We highly encourage you and your child to pack together. If you pack your child's things, please take 10 minutes to go over

everything in his bag with him, show him where stuff is and make sure he feels like he is well prepared for camp. If he packs his own bag make sure he has everything he needs and that he has not packed things he should not bring.



- Listen to and talk about concerns -

As your child prepares for his first camp experience be sure to talk with him about any uneasiness. Do not assume you know how he feels. Instead, ask questions that will help him explore what his is feeling as the time for camp approaches. Questions that are open-ended, like, "What are you looking forward to? Is there anything you are unsure about?" Answer his questions with confidence in his ability to handle being away from home. Assure him that he will be well cared for and remind him of things he has already accomplished independently in his life.



- Let your child practice being away from home -

We highly recommend this for new campers who are going away to camp for the first time. Have your child do an overnight at Grandma and Grandpa's house or another close friend's house without you. This will give him some experience in being away from home before heading off to camp.

- Begin praying about camp -

Set aside some time at meals or before bed to pray with your child about camp. Pray for your child's cabin mates, his counselors, the Bible studies he will participate in, the activities he will do, and for safety while at camp. All of our counselors at Lake Forest Ranch make sure to set aside some time to meet with each child one-on-one. Pray that the time your child spends with his counselor is meaningful.

- Be realistic -

Like the rest of life, camp will probably have its high and low points. Remind him that the main purpose of camp is to make friends and have fun while learning more about God. Set up a "thinking about you" time: you and your

child will think about each other every day at breakfast, when you see the first star of the night, or when you brush your teeth. Let your child know he is going to have the time of his life to build up his confidence level.

- Double-check the opening and closing - dates and times

Start camp off on a smooth note by arriving on time and on the right day. Use a wall calendar in the months prior to opening day to make an exciting count-down to the big day.

-Label everything -

It's easy to lose things at camp, but if you want it back, it's got to have your name on it. Label everything from your t-shirts to your tennis racket to your toothbrush. Leave really expensive gear at home. Most children lose something at camp, so remind him to check the lost-and-found on closing day. If your child uses a retainer or wears glasses it is always a good idea to send a backup pair. Include plastic bags or a laundry bag for wet or dirty clothing. "Containerize" smaller items when packing. Put similar things together in see-through travel bags, zip-locks or plastic units so that they are easy to find and keep organized. Put stationery/stamps/mail in large plastic envelopes or in a clipboard with a storage compartment. Pack linens, sleeping bags, pillows and outerwear in a duffle bag together. When packing your child's bag, place larger items on the bottom, folded or rolled and smaller items on top. If your child will be traveling to camp with his luggage on a church bus, make sure that he can comfortably carry what he is bringing with him.

