

TO BRING OR NOT TO BRING... A PARENT'S GUIDE TO PACKING

BY JEREMY GILLESPIE



Packing for summer camp can be a difficult task but with a few simple tips you can become a packing superstar! Most camps offer a packing list prior to camp but here's my tip list for parents on what to pack and what not pack:

1. Label your camper...it's a good thing—this isn't exactly an item that you pack but think of this as the most valuable thing that you can do for your camper. Not only will clothes be returned after being left at the lake or playing field, labeling helps the cabin counselor in matching clothes to campers. Trust me, counselors will love you for this!

2. Trunk size matters—check the bunk bed height so your trunk will fit below. In most camps bunks will have ample room underneath to store trunks. This makes for a neater cabin, fewer stubbed toes during that late night bathroom run and higher cabin cleanup scores. Also keep in mind that a trunk is much more functional than a duffel bag as they are used as steps, sitting areas for dressing, etc

3. Say no to GAP, yes to WalMart—camp tends to be messy at times and shopping at the GAP is not necessary. It's important to pack clothes that can get dirty since you never know when a jump in the mud pit, an impromptu clay fight or a good 'ole stomp in the creek will occur...

4. Water in, water out—camps stress hydration as a part of their health concerns. Pack a good water bottle! Water bottles are essential for campouts, climbing, biking and hiking trips, around camp during high energy activities and of course for catching lighting bugs. Another tip—label that water bottle!

5. What if little Johnny forgets us!—pack to avoid homesickness...some think that pictures of family or friends may induce the dreaded camp illness known as homesickness, however I believe pictures offer comfort and encourage healthy conversation among campers and staff. The favored stuffed animal or blanket can also provide an extra feel of home.

6. Ugg, wet and stinky tennis shoes—yuck! Whether your camper is stomping in the creek, walking from the lake, or just has hot sweaty feet...sandals are essential! Sandals offer a wet and dry version to shoes and are much more desirable after a long hike or running from the lake. What kid wants to take the time to tie their shoes at camp anyway? Slap on some sandals and go!

7. Hello mudda, hello fadda—every parent wants mail from camp! It's hard to find time to write a letter in between climbing the Nose at Pisgah, paddling the Green River or swimming in the lake. So, help us out mom and dad—pack self addressed and stamped envelopes. This will surely increase your chance of getting a letter.

8. I need a little light in here!—believe it or not, flashlights are always the "forgotten gear." Be sure to pack a flashlight, better yet, send your camper with a headlamp. These are great for night reading, going to the bathroom at night, camping trips and best of all they are hands free!

9. Yellow and blue make green—4-5 gallon size Ziplock bags are great for wet stuff that doesn't make it to the dryer before the trip home. Think wet shoes, wet swimsuits, towels, etc.

10. Phone Card—Most camps do not allow campers to call home on a regular basis so the phone cards are used mainly for the airports, train/bus stations and for communication purposes.

What not to pack (you're wasting your time):

1. Umm, doughnuts—whatever you do, never, ever pack food or candy in your camper's trunk. "Why not?" you ask. Simple food chain science. Food causes crumbs on the cabin floor, which offers goodies for mice, which causes not only holes in clothing but also snakes in the cabin. In the past I've seen stuffed animals filled with candy, books full of food and candy hidden under a box of new socks of new socks. Although James Bond would be proud skip the surprises - please don't send food.

2. What?! No flip flops?—Flip flops are a no, no. Flip flops don't have a heel strap so they often slip off, causing injury. Not good for your camper or the medical staff! Save the flops for the beach and invest in some sandals.

3. There's no signal out here!—cell phones, gameboys, ipods, etc have no place at camp. Most camps ban electronic equipment for campers. Some may allow ipods and such but in my opinion electronics have very little place in the cabin. Getting outdoors, away from all the distractions of the world is a great benefit of camp. Not allowing your camper to smuggle in the electronics, allows him/her the opportunity to experience an unplugged world and enjoy this great creation we call nature. Cha ching.

4. Splat, splat...bang, bang—fireworks, lighters, shaving cream (unless your camper actually shaves), toys and silly string need to stay at home. These are the ingredients for great pranks but also major damage. Be sure to check your camper's trunks as these items may be packed without your knowledge.

HAPPY PACKING!!!!

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