

# Sending Your Son to Scout Camp

## *Tips and Tricks to Preparing your Son by James A. Feuerstein*

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Sending your son to Scout Camp is a great way to build your child's self-confidence and self-esteem, but as every parent knows, there is always the chance that your son's experience may not go as well as planned. Here are a few ideas of how you can help to better ensure your son's success at any summer camp.

### **Practice a Little Independence**

It's no secret that many children are uncomfortable when separated from their parents. If you will not be staying with your child at camp, your boy will be more likely to succeed if they are experienced at staying away from home. Children need to learn to be comfortable even when traveling outside the safe environs of their home and parents. Do not make a week of summer camp the first time your son stays away from home. Short trips to grandparent's houses, overnight trips with your Cub Pack, and even participating in a variety of afterschool programs away from mom and dad will help your child adjust to spending time away from home and parents.

### **Adjust to the Outdoors**

While our camp is at a higher elevation and often cooler than the areas from which most campers come, new campers are still often unaccustomed to an exercise filled day away from air conditioning. It often takes up to a week to adjust to a warmer environment. Especially if your child spends his time in air conditioning during the day, make certain that they spend several hours each day playing outside before they come to camp. If your child is spending their first few weeks away from school glued to a TV or video games, make certain that they begin exercising before they come to camp. Scouts spend a significant amount of time walking, running and playing and you do not want your child to be the one who is unable to keep up!

### **Check with the Doctor Prior to Camp**

Get a physical prior to the start of camp, and make sure that your physician knows about the types of activities your child will be involved in. If your child is sick, take them to the doctor several days before they go to camp. That way they can recover before they separated from their parents and the comforts of home. Campers who arrive sick are often exhausted quickly by the demands of living in the outdoors.

### **Be Prepared!**

Make certain that your child is prepared for all kinds of weather. Pack clothing appropriate for both hot days and cold nights. Bring rain gear and more than one pair of shoes. Pack extra socks and sets of clothes in case your child is caught out in the rain. Work with your child to pack their gear. Remember, a major goal of sending your child to camp is for them to learn to be successful on their own. Have your son pack for camp himself and show you everything he packed. Brainstorm together any additional items he might want to bring. Don't allow your child to bring electronics, including cell phones. Camp leaders will make sure that your child calls home if they need to. You want your son to try to

be successful on their own, but if he has a cell phone, he can easily transfer responsibility for his lack of success back to you! Repeated calls home are the first sign that a child will be unsuccessful in their camping experience.

### **Know Your Leaders and Fellow Scouts**

Spend time with the leaders and boys who will go to your camp before summertime. If your child can build a strong network of friends within the Cub Pack, they will be able to rely on those friends if they become scared or uncomfortable. Scouts use the buddy system to ensure the safety of their campers, and you can help your son by ensuring that he has a strong system of buddies! Deep friendships with other Scouts will not only help your child feel comfortable at camp, but will help them through the rest of their life.

### **Choose a Quality Camp**

Choose a well administrated camp with a high quality program. Review camp materials and websites prior to the start of camp. It will be far easier for your child to be confident as they go to camp if you are confident that they will have a wonderful time. When in doubt, find multiple other people who have attended camp and ask for their experiences with the program. Most camps will gladly allow you to visit prior to the start of the program if you are still not sure.

### **When in Doubt, Try, Try, Again!**

Finally, even when you have done everything perfectly, a boy may still become so homesick that they need to travel back home. Sometimes a boy who has gone to the same camp before with no problems becomes homesick for no apparent reason the next year. Take your child's struggles in stride. No one is successful in every endeavor and your child may very well have a great experience at the same camp the next year. Strongly encourage your child to stay and try to be successful on their own. Most of us have had the experience of a crying child who doesn't want to be left at daycare, but is having a great time after we have gone. If your son is so upset that the situation is unmanageable for his leaders, ask if you can bring him home overnight and try again the next day. Many times a boy is just so exhausted from adjusting to a new experience that they just need a good night's rest in their own bed.

### **It's Worth It!**

It may seem like preparing for camp can be a major undertaking for a little boy and his parents, but the self-confidence you will build in your child is well worth the effort. Chances are you'll want this boy to one day be able to go off to college and find his own way in the world. You'll find that success in life will come easier if a child is able to build their self-reliance and independence one step at a time, and summer camp is a great boost to your child's self-concept!

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