

8 Tips for Getting Your Kids Packed for Summer Camp

The first year I sent my children to camp, I began preparations several months in advance. I ordered the camp logo items, purchased horseback riding boots, and soccer cleats (for a child who hates soccer and thinks horses are smelly), and had labels ironed or sewn into every last sock.

Now, five years later, I pack two days before the trunks leave, and it couldn't be easier.

Here are some of my tips for organizing for camp without the hassle:

1. Forget ironing or sewing on labels. Arm yourself with a Sharpie laundry marking pen or stickers that affix to the label of any item of clothing.
2. Go light on the toiletries. Remember that there's a fully stocked infirmary with band aids, Neosporin, ibuprofen, or anything else your child might need.
3. Have extra new socks and underpants. When you're purchasing the 18 pairs of socks and underpants required, buy an extra dozen of each. Have these in your child's drawer for when s/he returns from camp. Whatever makes it home after the summer will be ripe for the trash bin.
4. Use plastic travel bags to contain clothing. Put socks in one, bathing suits in another, t-shirts in another. This will make unpacking easier for your child.
5. If it fits in the trunk, it's not worth the fight. Your adolescent girl will want to take a hair dryer, flat iron, nail polish, and all of the clothes in her wardrobe. Let her.
6. Keep camp specific separate. Camp towels, linens, clothing with the camp logo, "bunk junk" (small games, flashlights, and canteens) should not be integrated into the linen closet, utility area, or play room. When packing next year, you'll have it all in one place.
7. Sneakers don't come home from camp. Tell your child not to bring home any sneakers or shoes except for the ones on his/her feet. They will be so dirty; you'll just be tossing them the minute they get home anyway.
8. Schedule the lice check. When your child gets off the camp bus, take him/her for a lice check before s/he enters the house.

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