

# **A Parent's Guide**

## **Summer 2019**



**[www.rawhideranch.com](http://www.rawhideranch.com)**

**Mailing address:**  
**6987 West Lilac Road**  
**Bonsall CA 92003**

**Ranch office email: [info@rawhideranch.com](mailto:info@rawhideranch.com)**

**Ranch office - (760) 758-0083 x 0**

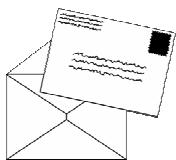


## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**How do I make the final camp payment for my camper? (if you registered early with deposit-only option).** Log in to your account through our website at [www.rawhideranch.com](http://www.rawhideranch.com) to make payments or mail a check to Rawhide Ranch, 6987 West Lilac Road, Bonsall, CA 92003 Final payments due by one month prior to the arrival date.

### **How do I send mail to my camper?**

The daily mail is delivered after lunch (Mon-Fri only). The campers always look forward to receiving letters, funny cards, photos, etc. from family and friends during their stay. You can mail letters ahead of time, please be sure to include the camper's name and camp date on the envelope. OR you can drop them off pre-written letters to us at check-in. You can write a letter for each day they are at camp. Write the camper's name and the day that you would like them to receive each letter on the envelope so we know when to deliver each letter. **Please note that our mail is delivered LATE in the day** (we deliver the camper mail at noon, and the USPS doesn't deliver our mail until about 2:00pm), so if you want your camper to receive their letter on a certain day or by/on Friday, please plan to have it arrive the day before.



Send U.S. Postal Service mail to:

**Camper's Name & Camp Dates  
Rawhide Ranch  
6987 West Lilac Road  
Bonsall, CA 92003**



**Important Note:** Remember to allow an extra day or two even for overnight delivery, due to our rural location. To give the mail the best chance of arriving during your camper's stay, try to have it postmarked no later than Tuesday of your camper's session.

Please DO NOT use the ranch's fax number or email address for camper correspondence. **We DO NOT have a camper email service.** Please only send mail via regular postal service or drop off at check in.

**Is a phone available for camper use?** We encourage campers to experience keeping in touch "the old-fashioned way"... writing and receiving letters. If a situation arises and we deem it necessary to contact the parent/guardian, one of our directors will call you.

**How do I contact the ranch in case of an emergency?** In case of a medical or family emergency contact the Rawhide Ranch office at (760) 758-0083. After office hours, our voice mail system will give you an emergency number you may use and/or an opportunity to leave a message for the Camp Director. The service is for **emergencies only**—callers needing general information, show times, etc. are asked to leave a voice mail and the call will be returned first thing in the morning.

**Are laundry facilities available?** The ranch provides the opportunity for campers staying for two or more consecutive weeks to send their laundry out. The cost is based on a per load basis. Cost is subject to change but is generally in the range of \$15 per camper, per load and payable upon check-out. The stay-over campers are reminded multiple times on Thursday morning about the laundry service and it is the camper's responsibility to make sure they bring their laundry to the office on Thursday in time for the service pick-up. Laundry facilities are not available at the camp.

**Can my camper be bunked with his/her friend as requested?** Yes. Upon registration, you are welcome to list a **1st choice bunkmate request** as well as an alternate choice, should your first choice not be available. To ensure your camper and the bunkmate they requested are together, each buddy should request each other. Campers are bunked by age, so bunkmates need to be close in age (**within one year**). Be sure you have added your bunkmate request to your camper's online registration. It needs to be updated each season - we do not keep that information on file from year to year. All campers will be placed in to cabin groups according to birth gender.

**We are not able to accommodate group requests,** but our program is designed for campers to have the opportunity to spend their entire day together within their program groups; so if your camper is attending camp with a group of friends, they will be assured of spending most of their time together if they choose to.

**IMPORTANT: Negative bunking requests...** If a camper (the negative requested) requests to be placed in your child's cabin (very common), we may need to inform that child's parents of the circumstances behind our inability to accommodate their request. We encourage you to work out these issues among the families prior to registration/arrival at camp or select another session if necessary.

### **Can families visit during the camp session?**

Part of the magic of camp is making great friends while being away from parents and loved ones for a short time. We ask that there be no visits to campers during the week's session as we are very busy and involved with our campers and they only have a short time to be at camp. Campers look forward all week to their family's arrival for the big show on Friday afternoon....see you then!

As noted in the "I Agree...." section with either the online or mail/fax registration... In order to provide the highest quality camp program & staffing we must plan well in advance based on confirmed reservations. Depending on the date of your reservation the cancellation policy is as follows:

- If you register your camper using the "Deposit Only Option", your payment of \$199 is non-refundable at any time.
- If you register your camper using the "Payment In Full Option" and your cancellation is received no later than 2 weeks prior to the arrival date of your registered session, you will be eligible for a refund of any additional payment over and above the \$199 deposit portion of your payment which is non-refundable.
- If you register your camper or cancel within the 2 weeks before the session arrival date, your full camp tuition payment is non-refundable by Rawhide Ranch.

**Are campers allowed to receive "care packages"?** Due to an escalating problem with cabins receiving pounds and pounds of candy/food, we ask that you DO NOT SEND/MAIL FOOD OR CANDY to your camper. There is no storage areas in the cabins for food/candy and if campers try to "hide" it in their luggage it tends to attract those pesky ants and mice into the cabin. When several campers in a cabin receive a well-meaning care package of candy or food "to share" it just goes to waste as it can not be stored or eaten during a short mail call time. Consider sending small gifts, photos, or additional "pony bucks" instead – coffee break times are a big event and the campers love choosing something from one of the snack areas.

**Is there a camp store for souvenirs?** Yes, the Rawhide Ranch Country Store is open during check-in and also during the Closing Show. Ranchhands will also have some time during their Coffee Breaks to visit the Country Store.

**Does my camper need spending money?** Pony Bucks are the "currency of choice" during each camper's visit. Daily coffee breaks give campers time to relax, have a cool drink or snack & visit our camp store. Campers generally find about \$40-\$60 per week sufficient.

In order to improve the camp experience for you and your camper, we have moved to a **cashless Pony Buck system**. This allows campers to access their spending money for the Sweet Shop, Country Store, and other activities without having to withdraw paper Pony Bucks from the Rawhide Bank and then carry it with them. Instead, campers need only to scan their wristband or give their name to access the funds you have placed in their virtual bank.

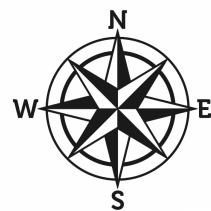
Some perks of this cashless bank system include:

- Less time for you at check-in and more time for your campers to experience everything at camp without waiting in line to withdraw Pony Bucks at the Rawhide Bank.
- The ability to set low balance alerts and add more funds if necessary.

Since we will no longer be accepting paper Pony Bucks, **we ask that all campers have an account set up**. Activating your account and making an online deposit is quick and easy. Each family will be sent an activation email from **Fun Fangle** with instructions for how to set up your account. If you do not see this email, please be sure to check your spam folder or contact the Ranch office and let us know. Only one email per family will be used to upload funds and view camper balances.

### **What if my camper does not use all of their spending money?**

Any balance left on your camper's account (exceeding \$5) at the end of our summer camp season will be automatically credited back to your original form of payment (either an electronic refund or a check will be mailed). If their balance is under \$5.00 it will automatically be donated to our Campership fund unless we hear otherwise prior to the end of the camp session.



## How to get to Rawhide Ranch:

### From Los Angeles/Orange County:

Drive INTERSTATE 5 South to Oceanside. HWY 76 off-ramp is just past Oceanside Harbor; head EAST on HWY 76. In Bonsall, turn RIGHT on CAMINO DEL REY, cross the bridge, stay LEFT at the Y in the road and just at the corner of the golf course turn LEFT on WEST LILAC ROAD. Rawhide Ranch is up the hill (approx. 3 miles); you'll see the sign on the RIGHT.

### From San Diego:

Drive INTERSTATE 15 NORTH to OLD HWY 395/US-395, turn LEFT at end of ramp. Go to top of hill; turn LEFT onto WEST LILAC ROAD. Ranch is approx. 1.6 miles ahead on your left.

Or use INTERSTATE 5 NORTH to HWY 76 then head EAST on HWY 76. In Bonsall, turn RIGHT on CAMINO DEL REY, cross the bridge, stay LEFT at the Y in the road and just at the corner of the golf course turn LEFT on WEST LILAC ROAD. Rawhide Ranch is up the hill (approx. 3 miles); you'll see the sign on the RIGHT.

### From Riverside/San Bernardino:

Drive INTERSTATE 15 SOUTH past Temecula. Take HWY 76 exit WEST towards PALA/OCEANSIDE. Turn LEFT onto OLD HWY 395 (at gas station plaza). Go up to top of hill. Turn RIGHT onto WEST LILAC ROAD. Ranch is approx. 1.6 miles ahead on your left.

### For GPS Directions...

6987 West Lilac Road  
Bonsall, CA 92003



**Is a shuttle service available from the San Diego airport for arriving/departing campers?** Rawhide Ranch does not have a regular shuttle service available. You will need to arrange for airport transportation to/from Rawhide Ranch.



## What to Bring...

- Jeans (2-3 per week. No capri length)
- Shorts (2-3 per week. Finger-tip length please; no short-shorts)
- Spandex or exercise-type shorts and/or pants for vaulting/climbing
- T-shirts (6-8 per week. No spaghetti straps, no offensive logos please)
- Pajamas
- Socks/Underwear (1 pair per day or more)
- Jacket/sweatshirt
- Tennis shoes/sneakers (required for vaulting—no slip-on styles)
- Cowboy/hiking type Boots or **sturdy shoes** (required for riding/animal care)... NO slip-on style or flimsy sneakers; must be lace-up with good, thick material; must provide a good amount of protection
- REQUIRED - Equestrian Riding Helmet** (Must be rated ASTM – SEI & Equine Approved with a helmet age of not older than 5 years) with camper's first and last name written in bold letters on or in the helmet. We will have helmets for sale in our store on check-in day
- Hat (Cowboy or baseball-style)
- Bandana(s)
- Toiletries (soap, shampoo, comb/brush, toothbrush, toothpaste, lip balm, deodorant, etc.)
- Bath towel/washcloth
- Swim suit (Girls, no bikinis please; tankini's ok) - summer camp only
- Shower shoes/Flip-flops
- Pool towel
- Sunscreen
- Sleeping bag/pillow
- Spending money (\$40-60)... **See page 3**
- Disposable camera—be sure to put name on it! (Leave those expensive digital cameras at home, please!)
- Pre-addressed/stamped envelopes & Stationary/pen
- Flashlight
- Refillable Water Bottle
- Bag for Dirty Laundry
- Extra garbage bag to re-pack sleeping bag on last day (**PUT NAME ON BAGS -They all look alike on check-out day!**)
- Bug spray—optional



**What to Leave at Home\***  
All electronic games/equipment, e- books/readers,  
**Cell phones**/Ipods/MP3/IPad's, etc.  
Pocket knives, personal sports equipment



Leave those “favorites” at home! If you'd hate to lose it, don't bring it to camp!

\*For safety reasons, pocket knives, illegal substances and hazardous materials (e.g. matches, fireworks, weapons, etc.) are prohibited. Any prohibited item (or other inappropriate/hazardous item) brought to camp will be held at the office until the end of the camp session. Any cell phone or other electronics brought to camp will be safely stored in the office until the end of camp session. **Please do not ask your camper to hide a cell phone in their luggage that might be borrowed by another camper without your camper's knowledge or put your camper in a position to lie about having a cell phone during the cabin meeting.**



## Camper Health & Medication IMPORTANT INFO—PLEASE READ

A health care staff member is in residence at Rawhide Ranch and will be available during check-in. **All medications (including prescription as allowed by Federal law or over-the counter drugs, vitamins, and all other supplements) must be brought to camp in the original container (as purchased or issued) and turned in during check-in.**

To reduce the amount of medications being given out during camp (which can be very time consuming for our staff and the campers) we ask that you please **do not send vitamins or over the counter medication**, unless **absolutely necessary**, with your child. Please refer to the Health History form for a list of OTC meds that we provide, and give your consent to administer.

Containers must detail the name of the child, name of medication, directions for dosage and the name of the person ordering the medication. **It is important for the safety of all campers in a cabin that ALL medications (even over-the counter medications) be kept with the staff—medication that is safe for one child may not be safe for another.** To avoid any unforeseen health issues we also ask that parents not use camp sessions as a time to try new dosages or new medications for their child. **For easy access during check-in do not pack any medications in your camper's luggage.**

As part of the camper medical form you must complete (in your online account), you must list any medications that your child will be taking at camp and the dosage instructions. If you need to edit or update your online medical form at any time after it's submitted please contact the Ranch office and let us know.

Parent(s) of campers will be notified of all injuries and illnesses that require the medical attention of a licensed Physician. In the case of a medical emergency, the parent(s) will be contacted as part of the emergency plan. If the injury or illness is not an emergency but in the opinion of Rawhide Ranch's lead health care staff member a Physician needs to be consulted, the parent(s) will be contacted as to their wishes regarding the situation.

We reserve the right to send a child home if our lead health care staff member or a physician so advises. If you plan to be away for any length of time during your child's time at camp, please arrange for a relative or neighbor to be available to pick up your child should he/she become ill. Please indicate this person on the Camper Release Form when you check your child in at camp.



## Extra Camp Options...

**Extra Options** - During the online registration process you will be able to select and pay for any of our extra camp options such as **Camp Photo**, **Weekend Stay-Over option** (for consecutive sessions only) **and more** by simply selecting the options and adding them to your cart. If at the time of your initial registration you are not yet sure what extra's you want to add, you can always log into your online account later (once your general camp registration is complete) and add extra options by clicking on "**view details**" for the registered camper and then under the summary for that camper click on "**Add campers, sessions, options**". From there you may add extra options by clicking on the registered session and then add the extra's you want to purchase. Do that for each session you have registered for.

**Camp Photos** - You may order an all-camp photo (1 all-camp photo is taken each week) during online registration or after (see above). **The photos are non refundable**. We also take photos of the campers throughout the week during their classes and activities. Those photos will be uploaded to our Smug Mug account at the end of each week. We will email the link to all parents/guardians so they may view and purchase photos if they'd like.

**Pony Bucks (Spending Money)** - See Page 3!

**Friday Dinner Tickets** - Each Friday we have our Wild West Fiesta Dinner for campers and families to enjoy together (see page 9 for show/meal times & info). The cost of the Fiesta dinner is included in the camp fee for the campers. Parents can purchase meal tickets ahead of time through their online account. Or on check-in day.

**Meal Prices:**      **Ages 8 & up - \$10**      **Ages 3 to 7 - \$5**      **Ages 2 & under - FREE**

**Stay-Over option for Consecutive Sessions (summer only)** - There is a \$109 fee per stay-over session, per child (Fri-Sun). If your camper decides they do not want to stay over, the \$109 fee is non refundable (after the 2 week deadline). Campers staying over between consecutive sessions will participate in the program we have in place for them Friday evening until Sunday afternoon when the next session begins. Parents/guardians are welcome to come for the Show each Friday. If you are planning to take your camper out for a few hours on Friday, we request they return no later than 7:00 p.m. If your camper would like to leave the ranch with an adult other than a parent, the ranch must have prior written authorization from the camper's parent/guardian. The weekend stay-over session is ONLY available to campers who are registered for consecutive sessions of camp.

Please note that in order to open up the weekend stay over option, **we must have at least 2 campers of the same gender staying over**. If we do not have at least 2 campers staying over, we will contact the parent and discuss the options with them.



### **Lost & Found**

Rawhide Ranch is not responsible for lost, damaged or stolen items. Please leave all expensive items and "favorite" clothing at home. Label every item & bag plainly with your child's name to help us in trying to locate any item you report missing. All lost and found will be held for two weeks after camp session before being donated to a charitable organization.

Rawhide Ranch asks to be reimbursed for cost of return postage.

**Please keep in mind we are a large ranch facility with many animals and there is always a chance of items getting dirty, broken or lost.**

## **Wondering what your camper's day will be like?**

Here's a typical day:

6:45 a.m. Wake up call  
7:30 a.m. Breakfast  
8:00 a.m. Animal Care  
8:45 a.m. Class/Elective 1  
9:40 a.m. Coffee Break  
10:10 a.m. Class/Elective 2  
11:05 a.m. Class/Elective 3  
12:00 p.m. Flagpole/Lunch  
12:45 p.m. Rest time/Mail call  
1:15 p.m. Class/Elective 1  
2:10 p.m. Class/Elective 2  
3:05 p.m. Coffee Break  
3:30 p.m. Class/Elective 3  
4:25 p.m. Animal Care  
5:00 p.m. Flagpole/Dinner  
6:00 p.m. Organized free time followed by all-camp activity  
8:00 p.m. Coffee Break  
8:30 p.m. Cabin Time  
9:30 p.m. Lights Out



The daily 3 or 4 core classes include riding, animal science, horse science, and/or vaulting (gymnastics on horseback).

Regularly scheduled electives include swimming, riflery, archery, vaulting, laser tag (now included in our regular program; no extra fees apply!), driver's ed (harnessing pony carts), camp newspaper, climbing tower, drama, roping, sports, country dance, craft, movie and much, much more. They also have 3 electives each day.

Rotating scheduled electives are based on the talents and interests of our counselor and program staff. Previous electives have included dance, nature study, astronomy, singing, exercise, first aid, etc.





## Sunday Check-In... Haudy ya'll!

Check-in is between **2:00-4:00 pm** on Sunday. Our staff will be involved with final preparations for camp until 2:00 pm, so an earlier check-in is not possible. Please do not ask us to make an exception. The check-in process begins at the entrance of the Ranch on Main Street. **For the safety of other visitors and the ranch's animals and pets, please leave your pets/animals at home.** All campers (regardless of age) must be accompanied by an adult to check-in.

We must have all of the required forms completed (online). Check with the ranch office if you are unsure about what you need to complete. If any forms are not completed upon your arrival you will be asked to complete it before camp begins.

Be prepared to walk to the cabin areas with your camper and their luggage. We encourage parents to help get their child settled in and then take time to meet their counselor and cabin mates. We kindly request that parents leave camp prior to camper orientation at 4:00 p.m.



## Friday Check-Out... Giddy up!

**Friday check-out begins at 2:30pm.** Stop at the hotel to complete the check-out process and then proceed to the show area. Please do not go into the housing areas prior to the show as our campers are changing and preparing for the show during this time. Your camper will meet you at the show arena after their event. Please leave pets at home.

### **For the safety of our campers PHOTO IDENTIFICATION is required at check-out.**

A government issued photo ID will be required from an authorized adult to check-out your camper. Be sure to bring it to the office with you to save a trip back to the car. On the "Authorized Camper Release" you may list any additional persons authorized to pick up your camper in case of emergency or if you will not be attending the closing show.

### **Closing Shows**

On **Friday** we will have **2 Shows** for both beginner and ranked competitions. Each camper has the opportunity to participate in one area of the show on Friday. Please be supportive and encouraging of your child in whichever show area they may be participating.

**1st Show** begins at **3:00pm** which will be the **Ranch Hand Show** (for all new and unranked campers) up at the Rodeo Arena.

**2nd Show** begins at **5:00pm** which will be the **Advanced Ranked Show** (for all ranked campers only) also up at the Rodeo Arena.

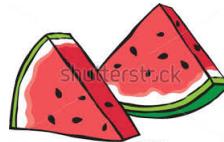
### **Friday Fiesta Dinner**

We have our **Wild West Fiesta Dinner** which will start serving at **4:00pm** and will remain open until after the last show starts. Parents can come early and eat with their campers before their show starts or stay until after the show and share a fun meal in the shade before heading home. The cost of the Fiesta dinner is included in the camp fee for the campers. Parents can purchase meal tickets ahead of time through their online account. Meal tickets can also be purchased on check-in day. When you come back on Friday to pick your camper up we will have your purchase ready when you go through the meal line.



#### **Fiesta Dinner Tickets:**

**Adults (ages 8 & up) - \$10**  
**Kids (ages 3 - 7) - \$5**  
**Ages 2 & under - FREE**



## Homesickness

### Preparing Your Child

For most children (including those who have been to camp before), homesickness is part of the baggage that accompanies a stay at camp. Parents can play a big role in helping their child to overcome homesickness, both before and during camp and, in doing this, grow even closer to their child. New campers enter a situation where they do not know the routine; they do not know other campers' names, counselor names, the geography of camp, etc. Once campers have a couple of days to adjust to the new setting and learn the basic routine, they usually shed their homesickness. Homesickness that lasts beyond the first few days is rare. In the unlikely event that homesickness lingers, you will be the key to your child's adjustment to camp life. When we are aware of severe homesickness, we will notify parents and keep them posted on their child's progress. We ask that you work with us to help make the camp experience as rewarding as possible for your child. Many campers are secretive and are afraid to share their feelings of homesickness with the staff. In such cases, we rely on parents to inform us when they detect or suspect homesickness through mail communications with their children. **However, please be aware that mail can take up to three days to arrive home from camp and many changes can take place in three days time at camp.**

Our approach to homesickness is one that we have found very successful and have compiled through many years of experience. We feel it is important to listen to and acknowledge a child's feelings, but it is also important for parents and counselors to focus on the many positive aspects of camp, such as exciting activities and new friends. Please do not make any "private deals" such as "Just call me if you are unhappy and we will drive up and take you home". These "deals" tend to undermine a child's ability to get through any initial homesickness period. For a parent, it is naturally difficult to not give in to a homesick child's wish to leave camp. We have found that campers make the best of their summer experience when parents fully support their efforts to gain independence and strength while spending valuable time away from home.

### Develop Realistic Expectations

Developing realistic expectations about camp is very important. Parents can sometimes over-glamorize the camp experience. ("You're going to have the best time of your whole life!" or "You'll make the greatest friends!") Obviously, going away to camp will be fun and worthwhile, but it is important to make sure your child understands it may not be fun every minute.

Go ahead and talk about the fun they will have; about liking some people more than others; and how hard it is to do everything that is offered at camp. Discuss worries they might have about not being "good" at an activity or about making friends. By doing this, you help "inoculate" children with their feelings so they are better able to recognize and cope with them.

Have you read.....

"P.S. I Hate It Here! Kids' Letters from Camp" by Diane Falanga?  
A fun & insightful book for new camp parents to put those letters into perspective.



## **Visit Camp Early**

Some children fare better at camp if they are able to actually see where they will be staying. Consider taking a trip to visit the ranch to give your child an opportunity to see the facilities and program in action. Call for details about a camp preview visit. Camp preview visits must be scheduled ahead of time.

Cautious children especially need to know: what a cabin looks like inside and out; where the bathrooms are; where they will be eating. Be sure to visit places of particular interest to your child.

Explain to your child that twinges of homesickness are common and nothing to worry about. Reassure them of your confidence in their ability to overcome the normal problems of separation. Together, draw up a set of procedures for being at camp in advance. ("If you're feeling homesick, what do you think you could do about it?") Have the child work out a plan. It could include some of the following elements: talk to her/his counselor; write letters to parents, grandparents and friends to ensure a steady supply of return mail; bring some hobby materials or some favorite games to play with others during free times in the day (free time is often when homesickness crops up. They are all ideas that Counselors and the Camp Director will also suggest and help to facilitate, but it helps a camper to think about them in advance with his/her parents.

Kids are often able to link home and camp more readily if they bring a "transitional" object with them. This can be a photograph, a favorite teddy bear, a good luck charm or even a blanket. Such transitional objects keep the connection with home fresh. Writing letters home also makes their time away easier.

## **Practice Separation**

It is recommended children and parents practice separation well before camp begins. Children can start gradually with an overnight away and work up to weekends (perhaps at their grandparent's house or with a good friend from school).

## **When is my child ready for camp?**

There is no formula, but some signs that point to a good first experience:

- The child enjoys spending the night with friends or relatives.
- The child has been to day camp and did well.
- The child feels comfortable in new situations apart from the family.
- The child can go to camp with a friend and stay in the same cabin.



## **Other Tips**

- Send your child to overnight camp only when he or she is ready, not when cousins or friends are ready. There is no "right" age, just the right time for each individual child.
- Before your child goes off to camp, reassure your child: "Yes, you can succeed and have a wonderful experience." Do not discuss how much you will miss him/her.
- Write and send letters before camp begins so your child will have them when they arrive, but do not talk about fun things he/she is missing/missed or tell them how much you will miss them. Keep the letters fun and light-hearted.



## **Homesickness While At Camp - What to Expect**

When children are first away from home, they may experience several days of mild to severe homesickness until they become adjusted to camp. Letters written during the first few days of camp may reflect this. Children generally gain independence and self-reliance from seeing their camp experience through to the finish. We will help your child feel connected to and supported by camp. If you anticipate or sense homesickness in your child, please speak privately with your child's counselor during check-in.

### **How Parents Can Help**

At camp, many children will test their effect on their parents and their own capacity to separate. At these times, it can be difficult for parents to insist their child follow through with camp. However, for school-age children, helping them deal with frustration, disappointment, conflict and sadness while remaining in their situation is appropriate. Giving your child confidence in their ability to cope with the difficulties of daily life and experience in handling an appropriate degree of discomfort and problems is good parenting because it helps them be independent, separate and strong.

In speaking to a homesick child, the best thing a parent can say is "I know you're feeling homesick. It's normal to have those feelings. I want you to make the adjustment and I feel confident that you can and that you will. I want to help you in any way I can to settle in. I don't expect you to be happy all the time or to stop missing us and missing home, but I do expect you to stay there and deal with the feelings you have. We'll write to you often and you will see through the commitment you made." Let your child know that camp is a commitment and that he/she is a person who respects and honors their commitments and gets satisfaction from following through (even though it might not always be easy all the time). Once the option of going home is closed, the work of adjusting to being at camp can begin. Most cases of homesickness fade away rather quickly, if treated with a little attention and recognition. We try to help the camper to make a place for him/herself within the camp community. Tough cases require a triple dose of effort, involving cooperation between parents, the camper and staff.

### **Common Pitfalls**

With the "try it for one more day" approach, we find campers typically stay exactly one day longer and then demand their parents make good on their promise. When they do, the loss is many-fold; the camper has uncertainties about their capacity to handle independence and has lost out on a great learning experience from which they had begun to gain many new skills and friends. It may be a long time before they will feel ready to break away.

Another common mistake is to "bribe" a child into staying at camp. Linking a successful stay at camp to a material object or other experience sends a message that camp is worth it just for a material object. The reward for fulfilling their commitment to stay at camp should be their new found confidence and independence.

There is a loss at camp, too. The amount of energy that staff and campers put into helping a homesick camper creates close ties. That invested energy pays off in great emotional involvement when homesickness is overcome. We hate to see campers leave camp early and we miss them when they go. Finally, other campers may become homesick or have their homesick feelings magnified by their friend's departure.



## Tips for Parents Coping With Homesickness at Camp

- If your child sends letters saying "I hate camp. I cried last night. I can't sleep at night," **DO NOT PANIC.** Send reassuring, supportive letters and talk candidly with the Camp Director to obtain his/her perspective on your child's adjustment. Homesickness is not a 24-hour-a-day affliction. It comes in temporary waves at odd moments of the day. Most homesick children have fun most of the time. Their fellow campers and counselors see their whole range of feelings and behavior – the parents hear only of the miserable moments in the most recent letter.
- Our experience at camp is that telephone conversations with parents tend to encourage homesickness in campers, so campers are not permitted to initiate telephone calls home. Do not forget to **reach a verbal agreement ahead of time with your child to honor our "no phone calls" policy.**
- If your child asks to speak with you on the phone, we will talk with you in advance about it. When speaking with your child, offer calm reassurance and put the time frame into perspective. Avoid the temptation to take them home early. Let him/her know it will be an adjustment for the whole family, but it is a worthwhile experience and part of growing up. Speak with your child for a moderate amount of time. Reinforce the positive aspects of camp.
- Do not feel guilty about encouraging your child to stay at camp. For many children, camp is a first step toward independence and plays an important role in their growth and development.
- When it is time for the call to end, ask your child to pass the phone to the staff person, who will be there for the duration of the call. This will give you a chance to talk with a staff person and make for an easier transition than hanging up on your child.
- Trust your instincts.
- If all efforts fail, your child may go home. If their stay at camp is cut short, focus on the positive and encourage your child to try camp again next year. We will never make them feel guilty about it and we hope you will support us in that. Say, "I'm proud you stayed as long as you did". If your child says, "Never again," while you are hugging him/her quietly say, "Never is a long time. Perhaps, one day you will tell me that you are ready to go to camp."

**Article:** "You Can Try or You Can Just Give Up: the Impact of Perceived Control and Coping Style on Childhood Homesickness" by Christopher A. Thurber, Ph.D. and John R. Weisz, Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, in *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 33, No. 3. Complete text available from American Psychological Association Public Affairs Office. Phone: (202) 336-5707 or e-mail: [public.affairs@apa.org](mailto:public.affairs@apa.org).

**Article:** "Handling Homesickness at Camp" by Susan Herman. Complete text available at [www.interlocken.org/family\\_handbook/article.htm](http://www.interlocken.org/family_handbook/article.htm).

Also our thanks to Camp Seymour for providing information from their handbook to utilize in preparation of this Parents' Guide.



See you at camp!