

**Why summer camp for your child?**  
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Connecticut Camp Guys

Parents have dozens of choices these days to keep their children busy over the summer months, sports programs, public swimming pools, local parks, enrichment programs, arts programs, summer schools, pool clubs, neighborhood babysitters, or even just staying home with mom or dad...so why should they send their child to summer camp?

While all of those choices are good, the right summer camp provides children with opportunities that are unique to other summer activities. Since the start of the 1900s, camp programs across the United States have offered a successful and positive developmental experience for campers. Camping has provided valuable lessons in building character and self esteem, developing leadership skills as well as learning how to become a thoughtful supporter. Camping has also given children the opportunity to enjoy the outdoor environment and develop an appreciation for nature. Above all that however, camping provides a lifelong skill that is extremely important in all walks of life, it provides a setting to make new friends and learn how to get along with others.

Now how does a two-week experience at a summer camp program provide all of that you ask – great question. It is an easy formula that is difficult to duplicate any where but at summer camp: take a group of six to ten children, lead by an enthusiastic and responsible camp counselor, place them in an outdoor environment and a proven summer camp program that provides dozens of age-appropriate activities and opportunities to learn new skills. Although it seems easy, it is often harder than it sounds to make that formula work. Here are some keys to success:

**The Group...**should be a mix of children that are all developmentally at the same level. Having a variety of ethnic backgrounds and diversity would be a plus; however, a variety of personalities will be a guarantee. The group should be together for a minimum of two-weeks, allowing enough time for the camp counselor to lead the children in activities that will give them the chance to learn about each other, work as a team, form friendships and allow each child the experience of being a leader and a supporter.

**The Camp Counselor...**should be an energetic and positive role model. He or she should be well trained and have a proven record for using good judgment. They will need to have solid leadership skills as well as an understanding of the group's developmental characteristics. The camp counselor should have a good understanding of their role in each child's personal development and look for teachable moments to instill positive character values into each camper and the entire group.

**The Outdoor Environment...**will be extremely important in the success of the summer camp formula. In the best case scenario, the setting should be drastically different than the school setting they have just spent the last ten months in. For some children, this may be their only opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors. In today's day and age, many children spend countless hours in front of the TV or computer and spend limited time outside. Learning to appreciate nature should be a major part of any successful summer camp program.

The Program...should be high quality, well planned out and have a proven track record. It should be filled with a variety of age appropriate activities and provide tons of opportunity for children learn and develop new skills. The program should be designed in a progressive manor so that the older campers have more advanced opportunities and experiences so that each summer campers will learn something new. Program goals should include teaching campers to grow personally, learn values, improve personal relationships, appreciate diversity, become better leaders and supporters, skill and asset development, appreciation for the environment, promote physical activity and most importantly, have FUN!

The fact of the matter is that there are plenty of high quality options for your children this summer, but if you are interested in providing your children with memories and experiences that will last a lifetime, a high quality summer camp is the place for your child. If you would like more information on summer camp options for your child, feel free to contact Mark Pooler or Patrick Connelly at [www.ctcampguys.com](http://www.ctcampguys.com)