

## Introduction

When the school year ends, that means Summer Camp season has arrived! We've gathered some activity ideas and tips from Summer Camp professionals and compiled them into this one, handy Summer Camp Guide. From Tie Die 101, to a checklist of "must haves" for counselors, we have something for everyone.

We know how important Summer Camp is to all the campers, counselors, directors and parents, so we wanted to help everyone have the best summer possible! Enjoy the guide and have a safe and wonderful summer!

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S&S Worldwide (<http://www.ssw.com>)

**Disclaimer:**

S&S Worldwide and the authors of these ideas cannot be held responsible for implementing them inappropriately in summer camp programs or in other movement settings.

**E-mail:** [social@ssww.com](mailto:social@ssww.com)

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## Daily Holiday Calendars

On the S&S blog, you will find calendars with [Daily Holidays and Observances](#) and [Fitness Challenge calendars](#) as well to keep kids active. These calendars are great for preparing activities, crafts, and games for summer camp! We post each calendar in advance so you can check back each month and plan ahead!

**S&S Worldwide FITNESS CHALLENGE MAY 2022**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 5 Bicycles Skip in Place (60 seconds)	2 3 Burpees 5 Knee to Elbow	3 5 Bicycles 3 Frog Jumps	4 TENNIS TASK CARD OR CHOOSE A SPORT	5 3 Burpees Skip in Place (20 seconds)	6 5 Bicycles 5 Knee to Elbow	7 3 Burpees 3 Frog Jumps
8 7 Bicycles Skip in Place (20 seconds)	9 5 Burpees 7 Knee to Elbow	10 7 Bicycles 5 Frog Jumps	11 VOLLEYBALL TASK CARD OR CHOOSE A SPORT	12 5 Burpees Skip in Place (20 seconds)	13 7 Bicycles 7 Knee to Elbow	14 5 Burpees 5 Frog Jumps
15 9 Bicycles Skip in Place (30 seconds)	16 7 Burpees 9 Knee to Elbow	17 9 Bicycles 7 Frog Jumps	18 TENNIS TASK CARD OR CHOOSE A SPORT	19 7 Burpees Skip in Place (30 seconds)	20 9 Bicycles 9 Knee to Elbow	21 7 Burpees 7 Frog Jumps
22 12 Bicycles Skip in Place (40 seconds)	23 10 Burpees 12 Knee to Elbow	24 12 Bicycles 10 Frog Jumps	25 VOLLEYBALL TASK CARD OR CHOOSE A SPORT	26 10 Burpees Skip in Place (40 seconds)	27 12 Bicycles 12 Knee to Elbow	28 10 Burpees 10 Frog Jumps
29 15 Bicycles Skip in Place (50 seconds)	30 12 Burpees 15 Knee to Elbow	31 15 Bicycles 12 Frog Jumps				

**Keep Students Active in May!** These fitness activities can be done at home with no equipment needed. On Wednesdays, if kids do not have tennis balls, volleyballs, or alternatives, they can choose their favorite sport in honor of **National Physical Fitness & Sports Month**.

- Refer to Tennis & Volleyball Cards on Page 3
- For Knee to Elbow exercise, repeat for each side

Find the visuals & descriptions for each fitness activity below.



Visit [www.healthiergeneration.org](http://www.healthiergeneration.org) for more ideas on how to inspire a healthy, active lifestyle.

### Daily Holidays & Observances Calendar

**S&S Worldwide**

2022	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
MAY	1 Lei Day World Laughter Day	2 National Baby Day	3 Teacher's Day National Two Different Colored Shirts Day	4 Star Wars Day Bird Day	5 Cinco De Mayo Make-A-Book Day National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day	6 National Nurses Day National Space Day	7 Kentucky Derby Day National Scrapbook Day Mother Ocean Day National Fitness Day
	8 Mother's Day World Red Cross Day	9 National Sleepover Day National Lost Sock Memorial Day	10 Clean up Your Room Day	11 National Twilight Zone Day National School Nurse Day	12 National Limerick Day	13 Frog Jumping Day Leprechaun's Day	14 Dance Like A Chicken Day National Train Day
	15 National Chocolate Chip Day	16 Love A Tree Day Wear Purple For Peace Day	17 World Baking Day Dinosaur Day	18 International Museum Day	19 May Day World Plant a Vegetable Garden Day	20 World Bee Day National Bike to School Day NASCAR Day National Pizza Party Day	21 Eat More Fruits & Vegetables Day National Memo Day Armed Forces Day
	22 Buy A Musical Instrument Day National Maritime Day	23 World Turtle Day	24 National Scavenger Hunt Day International Tiara Day	25 National Brown-Bag-It Day	26 National Paper Airplane Day	27 Sunscreen Day National Wig Out Day	28 National Hamburger Day
	29 Paper Clip Day National Learn About Composting Day	30 Memorial Day Water A Flower Day National Creativity Day	31 National Speak in Complete Sentences Day	1	2	3	4
5	6	May 2022 Daily Holidays & Observances Calendar  Refer to this calendar for inspiration and themed activity ideas for your program! Find ideas below and click the Daily Holidays link to find related items to support your activities.  <a href="http://www.sandsonline.com/daily-holidays-may">www.sandsonline.com/daily-holidays-may</a>					

## Camp Counselor Checklist



Face Masks
Sanitizer and Hand Wipes
First Aid Kit
Whistle and lanyard
Sunscreen
Sunglasses
Collapsible water bottles
Flashlight
Tally Counter
Safety pins
Duct tape
Neon Fanny Packs
Hula Hoops
Chat Pack / Conversation Cards
Toss 'n Talk-About®Ball
Inspirational silicone bracelets
Poly Spots / Spot Markers
Light backpack/totebags
Journal
Deck of cards
Board games
Stopwatch
Stickers
Small prizes
Candy

Find all the above items and more [at S&S!](#)

## Themes

Themed activities are an important part of Summer Camp. The list below will help with inspiration as you plan your themes this year. Find 10+ activity ideas for each theme!

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### Outer Space & Galaxy Themes



Explore the galaxies during your summer camp program and bring the excitement level of campers to infinity and beyond! Make galaxy slime, fun alien creatures from Mars, rocket ship frames, telescopes, and more.

[Read More](#)

### Wildlife & Jungle Safari Themes



If you are planning a Wild Animal, Jungle, or Safari theme for your summer camp, make sure you make it extROARdinary for your campers! From dramatic play to jingle themed shadow drawing, your group will love celebrating this theme!

[Read More](#)

### Dinosaur Theme



Plan a Dinosaur theme to keep campers engaged in your activities! They can improve skills in creativity, fine motor skills, and counting with these 15+ dino crafts, activities, and games.

[Read More](#)

## Western & Country Themes



Decorate your entire Activity Room with an entire Wild West, Country, or Barnyard theme and get your group excited with accessories like cowboy hats and bandanas. Try new games, crafts, and other activities!

[Read More](#)

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## Under the Sea & Nautical Themes



Nautical or Under the Sea theme is the perfect summer themed to add to your summer camp program. Set up stations for your group to experience each activity hands-on. Use fun ocean characters and colorful projects to engage campers.

[Read More](#)

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## Superhero Theme



Campers will have a SUPER fun time creating DIY Superhero crafts. They can learn how to make a Batman plate, Wonder Woman bookmark, Superman frame, and create their own superhero capes!

[Read More](#)

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View our website for additional [theme ideas!](#)

## 6 Timeless Icebreakers for Summer Camp



The start of camp is always the hardest because everything is new. Icebreaker activities can help the initial anxiety melt away and have positive effects on a student's interpersonal skills, character, and self-efficacy. Here are 6 icebreaker ideas to make campers and counselors feel more comfortable.

### **Mighty Nice to Meet Ya!**

**Beginning Formation:** All participants stand in a group.

- The instructor will ask everyone to get ready to move.
- All folks in the group are tasked with meeting as many people as they can, BUT they must do the following:
  - Shake hands with each person they meet
  - Look that person right in the eye and say, "My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Mighty nice to meet ya!" – usually a huge smile helps during this introduction.
- After greeting one person, find another person and repeat the process.

### **Memory Circle**

**Beginning Formation:** All participants sit in a circle.

1. Choose one person to start.
2. The first person states their name and favorite animal (or any other fun topic you'd like to use, such as favorite food or favorite hobby).

3. The person to the right of them must state the previous person's name and favorite animal, plus their own.
4. Then next person must state the name and favorite animal of the first two people, plus their own.
5. Repeat this clockwise down the circle.

### **Find Your Partner**

**Equipment Needed:** One [blindfold](#) for every two people

**Beginning Formation:** Partners are scattered on the playing field or half a basketball court.

1. Have each person pair up with a partner with one blindfold for every pair.
2. One person puts the blindfold on while his or her partner becomes the spotter/guide.
3. Choose three to four pairs to be "it". Those who are "it" are to chase (walking only) those who are "not it" (regular tag rules). If you are tagged, your pair is "it".
4. The beauty, of course, is in the expertise and safe guidance of the blindfolded person away from those who are "it". They can do this using verbal cues or by putting their hands on their partner's shoulder to guide them around. NOTE: All tagging must be made by the blindfolded people only.
5. Switch roles so that everyone gets a chance to be a spotter and a blindfolded person.

### **Hog Call**

**Equipment:** One [blindfold](#) per person

**Beginning Formation:** Campers are scattered throughout the playing area. A grassy area is preferable in case someone falls.

1. Pair campers up.
2. Give each person a blindfold.
3. Tell them the story of how a little girl names Sally lost her pet pig one day on a farm. The only way she could find her pig was by making pig noises until it came back to her. This is known as a hog call. Each pair will have their own hog call. It can be some type of noise or a word.
4. Have the pairs spread out and put their blindfolds on.
5. Let them make hog calls until they find each other.



6. Have them pair up with new partners and repeat.

### **Hoop Relay**

**Equipment:** One hula hoop per person

**Beginning Formation:** Line up teams of five or six people in “relay fashion”. A pile of five hoops should be placed at the head of the line.

1. Team members should link up by holding hands, either side by side or “elephant” style.
2. On GO, the first person sends the hoop down one at a time toward the back of the line.
3. When the last person in line collects all five hoops, he or she runs to the front of the line with all of the hoops and assumes the #1 position, reconnecting the important hand link.
4. The process is repeated until the very first person resumes their starting position. The team then sits down.
5. The first team to sit down is the winner. Repeat two or three times and vary the link up!

### **Rock, Paper, Scissors**

**Beginning Formation:** Two teams line up with 30-yard lines marked off in either direction from the center line.

1. Remember, ROCK (clenched fist) beats SCISSORS (index and middle finger in scissor-like fashion); SCISSORS cuts PAPER (flat hand); and PAPER covers ROCK.
2. Each team huddles up and chooses one symbol plus two backup symbols (in case of a tie). The teams break and line up at the center line one foot away from the line.
3. On the instructor’s cue (GO, SHOOT, etc.), all players on each team simultaneously reveal their chosen signal. NOTE: All members of a team must shoot the same sign. If the team chooses ROCK, all members of that team must shoot ROCK.
4. Whichever team shoots the more powerful sign is the team that begins to chase and tag any and all members of the other team as soon as possible.

5. The members of the losing team will sprint as fast as they can across the 30-yard expanse with the hope of reaching the safety zone before being tagged. The safety zone is the zone right past the 30-yard mark.
6. If tagged before reaching the safety zone, that person becomes a member of the winning team for the next round.
7. The object of the game is for one team to get all the players on its side, eliminating the competition and claiming the title of the “Grand Champs”.

## 5 Summer Camp Games to Engage Campers



### Roller Ball

This game is simple and fun. You will need a court-sized playing area. A basketball court is preferable.

#### **Equipment:**

- [Cones](#) (to make a dividing middle line)
- Several balls that roll such as [soccer balls](#), [volleyballs](#), [Gator Skin balls](#), or [kickballs](#)

#### **Instructions:**

1. Split your group up into two teams.
2. Divide the playing area in half with cones.
3. Each team goes to one side of the court.
4. The team starts by making three passes to three separate players. Decide which team goes first by flipping a coin or some other fair method.

5. After the team makes three passes, the third player must roll the ball off the other side's back line. The back line can be something you establish with cones or the existing painted line on a basketball court.
6. If one team gets a ball past the back line of the opposing team, they get a point. Keep playing for 5-10 minutes. Whoever has the most points at that time wins the round.
7. Play several rounds.

### **A Pot Of Gold**

This game is a fun way to keep players moving and thinking on their feet. It can be played safely on any sized playing area.

#### **Equipment:**

- Five [hula hoops](#)
- As many [beanbags](#) or [fluff balls](#) as you can find
- Three green [pinnies](#)

#### **Instructions**

1. Place one hula hoop in the center of the playing area and fill it with all the beanbags.
2. This center hoop will be designated as the "pot o' gold."
3. Place the remaining four hoops in each corner of the area. These hoops will be the collection spots for the beanbags after they are picked up from the pot o' gold.
4. Pick three players to be the "leprechauns," or taggers, and have them wear pinnies.
5. Divide the players into four different groups, with one group per hoop.
6. Each group will try and steal as much gold from the pot as possible. The players should take only one beanbag at a time.
7. If a player is tagged, they must bring the beanbag back to the pot o' gold and return to their hula hoop and start over.
8. Players will begin running when the whistle is blown and stop when all the gold has run out.
9. Play for 1-2 minutes, and then stop to change "leprechauns."

### **Ga-ga Ball**

#### **Equipment:**

- Several [Gator Skin balls](#), [volleyballs](#), or other hittable [balls](#)

## Instructions

1. The game begins when the ball is thrown against the side of the playing area or up in the air. When the ball bounces once, it is considered “live” and the play begins.
2. Players hit the ball at the other players. Players use their hands to block. If a player is hit or touched by the ball, they are out.
3. If a player “double hits” the ball, they are out. The ball may be hit twice by the same player but only if it bounces off the wall between the two hits. Just touching the ball counts as a hit.
4. Players removed from the game stand still on the sides or in the corners of the play area. They are now walls for balls to bounce off of.
5. Continue removing eliminated players until only two players remain. These two players have a showdown to see who wins the game. Holding the ball is still not allowed; however, the final two players may touch the ball three times in a row.
6. Players not playing shall chant, “Ga-ga.”

Check out our [Ga-Ga Ball blog](#) for more details.

## Cookie Monster Tag

### Equipment:

- [Cones](#) to mark boundaries
- [Pinnies](#) and [fluff balls](#) for everyone in the group

### Instructions:

1. Set up two end lines 20 yards apart using the cones.
2. Have the players line up at one end line side by side.
3. Designate one player to be the “cookie monster”, and the other players will be the “cookies.” The cookie monster holds a fluff ball and wears a pinny while standing in the middle of the area facing the cookies.
4. The cookies start the game by asking, “Cookie monster, cookie monster, are you hungry?”
5. The monster either says, “Yes, I’m hungry!” or “No, I’m not hungry.”
6. If the monster says, “No, I’m not hungry,” the cookies need to ask again.
7. When the cookie monster says, “Yes, I’m hungry!” all the cookies must try and get to the other side without being “eaten” or tagged.
8. Tagging is done with two fingers between the shoulders and waist.
9. The cookie monster must move the same way as the cookies: fast walking.
10. If players make it to the other side, they must wait for the signal to begin again.

11. If tagged, players become cookie monster helpers. Helpers must also put on a pinny and hold a fluff ball. Continue the game until there are no more cookies left, and then start again.

### **Messy Backyard (Clean Your Room)**

This fun game is close to dodgeball, which is exciting for players since dodgeball is an understandably banned game by the governing body of physical education. At summer camp, players can enjoy the thrill of the competition.

#### **Equipment:**

- Half dome cones for a middle line marker
- Yarn balls to throw

#### **Instructions:**

1. Split the class into two teams, with each team defending one half of the playing area.
2. Divide the space in half with half dome cones as a center line.
3. Have as many yarn balls as you can on the floor.
4. There should be an equal amount of balls on each side.
5. On the instructor's signal, players will throw the balls on their side over to the opponent's side.
6. The team with the least amount of balls on their side when the instructor stops the game wins.
7. Players cannot cross the middle line.
8. If players throw the ball after the stop signal is given, their side loses the round.
9. Play 3-5-minute rounds.
10. Stress safety. Any player that hits another player with a ball will sit out for a time specified by the instructor.

## 5 Must-Have Mobile Apps



### [Class Dojo](#)

This fantastic behavior management and communication tool is one I rely on heavily as a physical education teacher. I wish I had it in my camp counselor days. With Class Dojo, you can set up a group and input children's names. You can then create different behaviors you want to enforce and assign point values to them. You then can give points to individuals or the whole group when they follow the rules you set up or take points away if they break a rule. In addition, you can get parents to sign up to follow their child's behavior. You can show parents their child's reports, upload moments with photos and other things you want to share, take attendance, and so much more! It is also free to use.

### [Evernote](#)

This is going to be your best friend for note keeping! In my day, we carried around notebooks filled with important information. By the end of the summer, they were ruined by the weather. Evernote is a digital notebook on steroids. You can set up notebooks, sub notebooks, and individual notes you assign to a notebook or subnotebook. It allows you to upload files and images as well as share notes with others. This is great for keeping medical notes, schedules, game ideas, and so much more. It is also free to use.

### **Phone Native Apps**

I use two main native apps in my teaching day. I use the stopwatch to count down games and keep track of how long we have been doing something. I also use it to show

the students how much talking is wasting their time. I start it and let them watch the seconds add up, so they learn the result of a poor choice. I use it to set alarms for reminders too, such as when a student needs to check in with the nurse to get meds and other important events. The other apps I use are the calendar, contacts, messenger, email, and calculator. I like to know what is going on for any given day and record it. In addition, I like to communicate quickly with colleagues, tally up scores, and do quick math for games. I am sure there are other useful native apps such as notes and reminder apps that are great as well.

### **[PE Geek Apps](#)**

Looking for game ideas fast? The apps from this company have games for most occasions. Many apps are paid, but they are worth their cost. Apps cover swimming games, drama games, jumping games, balance games, PE games, and other types of games. If you are solely looking for free options for activity ideas, make sure you search the web for ideas on sites like [PE Central](#) and [S&S Worldwide](#).

### **[Team Shake](#)**

Making teams is a fundamental and important need for many situations. From bathroom buddies to teams for games, it is important to get the team right so there is no unfairness or arguing. Team Shake makes this possible with the shake of your phone. You can create random teams by color, save them for later, easily input or import students, choose a random student, and so much more. This powerful app will help you pick students for the many tasks in a camp day and help you remember who did what, so you give everyone a chance. This is worth more than the dollar it costs to purchase.

### **[Pocket First Aid and CPR App](#)**

This app from the American Heart Association is a literal life saver. It has all the current emergency procedures you need to deal with cuts, scrapes, bites, all the way up to CPR. This is one app you probably do not want to have to use regularly, but one you need to have in case you need a reference in a first aid or emergency situation. It is also free.

### **Other Apps to Consider**

- Roll Call Attendance Made Simple (iTunes store app)
- [Coin Toss](#)
- A Pedometer App
- A couple of children's games such as the [Toca Boca](#) games for students who cannot physically participate
- A music app

## 5 Best Active Indoor Games For Rainy Days



### General Guidelines for Indoor Games

- **Safety First** – When doing any indoor activity, whether in an open space or a space filled with items, safety is the number one priority. It is important to stress to campers that they are in a confined space and that accidental bumping may occur. Let them know that you'll know when it's not an accident and manage the concern.
- **Set the Rules** – To ensure fair and safe play, establish clear rules that everyone understands and check for their understanding.
- **Mark of Danger Zones** – If there is an area that has sharp edges or is wet, put up a barrier to keep campers away. Clearly identify these danger zones to avoid injury.
- **Keep It Simple** – As you will see with the activities below, they are very simple. The simpler you keep it, the more fun and safer the activity will be. The more complex the game is, the greater the chance for confusion, which can lead to someone getting hurt.

### Fitness Bingo

#### Equipment:

- Bingo sheets with exercises on them
  - 1 writing instrument per camper
1. Each player gets a copy of the bingo sheet with a pencil or crayon to mark off spots on the sheet.



2. The sheet can have nine different physical activities. Be creative! This can include jumping jacks, bear crawling, running in place, hopping on one foot, and more. Feel free to draw pictures to represent the activities to make it easier for younger campers. It's okay if each sheet you create is exactly the same.
3. Pick a camper to call out the bingo exercises.
4. Each time an exercise is called, all campers must perform that exercise. Select the number of times you want them to perform each exercise.
5. The first camper to call bingo when they win gets to call out the exercises during the next round.

### Silent Speed Ball

#### Equipment:

- 5-7 [Gator Skin balls](#)

1. Have the players form a group in a circle. They must not talk.
2. The campers are to throw the ball across the circle to another camper.
3. If the other camper fails to catch the ball, they are out. If a camper talks, they are also out.
4. The goal is to be the last one left at the end.
5. Add more balls as the campers become more comfortable with one ball. This adds more competition and challenge!

### Paper Airplane Bonanza

#### Equipment:

- [Construction paper](#) or regular paper of different colors
- [Glue](#)
- [Crayons](#)
- [Scissors](#)

1. Teach the campers how to make a basic paper airplane. If you don't know how, search the internet or ask if one of the campers knows how.
2. Allow the campers 10-15 minutes to create and design their plane.
3. Line the campers up at a designated spot.
4. Let them throw the planes.
5. Repeat several times.

## Sit Down Tag

### Equipment:

- One chair or **big ball** per camper to sit on
1. Have students spread out as if they are in a classroom and stand in front of their chair or ball. You can also decide to just have campers sit on a specific spot on the floor.
  2. Pick one camper to be the tagger. The tagger's job is to quickly run around and tag the other students before they can sit down. Tagging should only be with two fingers on the other camper's shoulder or upper back.
  3. Students who are not taggers start the game standing in front of their chair. They cannot sit down until the tagger attempts to tag them.
  4. If tagged, the camper has to do ten jumping jacks in their spot to get back in the game.
  5. If the camper sits down before the tagger tags them, they have five seconds to stand back up.
  6. The tagger may not babysit or stand over those they just tagged.

## Hula Hoop Tic-Tac-Toe:

### Equipment:

- 9 **hula-hoops**
  - 6 **beanbags** (3 beanbags of one color and 3 beanbags of another color)
  - 2 **batons**
  - 2 **cones**
1. Line the campers up in two equal lines. You can do boys vs. girls, bunk vs. bunk, or half and half.
  2. Set 9 hula-hoops like a tic-tac-toe board five to ten yards away.
  3. Have campers line up by teams behind their respective cone.
  4. Place the three colored beanbags and one baton in front of each line.
  5. The first child in each line picks up the baton and a beanbag and runs to the tic-tac-toe board where they place the beanbag in a hoop of their choosing.
  6. The student runs back to the line and hands the baton to the next person in line. That person runs out with the second beanbag and places it in a position to try and block the other team from winning. They then run back and hand the baton to the next person.

7. The third person picks up the last beanbag and places it on the board in an attempt to block the other team or get three in a row first. They then run and hand the baton to the fourth person in line if need be.
8. Person four runs to the board, picks up one of their beanbags, and tries to place it in a different hoop on the board to block the other team or to get their team closer to winning.
9. This continues until you have a winner. It's just like regular tic-tac-toe but with hoops and beanbags.
10. Repeat for multiple games.

View our step by step [tutorial of this game](#), including a video!

## 5 Important Skills Children Learn at Summer Camp



The beauty of summer camp, especially sleep away camps, is that it helps create a sense of independent pride in the child. They get the 'I can do this on my own' feeling. This will affect them later in life when they face a challenge and they reflect on their time in camp, not always knowingly: they survived a bee sting, or completed a rope course and overcame their fears. Problem solving, grit, perseverance, and hard work are all skills summer camp can imbed in a child that will follow them, as they become an independent adult.

### **Social Skills**

In summer camp, teaching children how to socialize is a planned endeavor. There are bunk times where they campers have some down time. There are campfires and hikes. There are games for problem solving and ice breaking, and these happen on an intense basis in an environment where no academic structure can interfere. This allows the camp and counselors to focus on teaching campers how to make friends, how to apologize, solve a problem with a friend, find common ground, and all the other intricacies that come with socializing.

### **New Skills and Likes**

Camp is a great place to learn new skills and to learn you like things you never knew existed. Camps expose students to new skills and activities and you never know which one a camper will take to and keep in their life. It could be boating on the lake or shooting hoops on the court for the first time. In this sense, camp has a lifelong impact on a child's skill development in new activities and learning what they like, and it teaches them to try new things, because you never know if you like it. I believe this is something that makes life adventures as you age.

### **Appreciation for Diversity**

Summer camp is a great place to learn about different cultures, from things you make in arts and crafts, to games you play, and the people you meet. Camp offers children an awesome way to interact with those who seem different to them, only to realize they have a lot in common. More so now than ever, I think this is a critical role a camp has. With the world becoming ever more diverse, children need to learn tolerance and respect for other people's ways of life, and camp can be the channel through which this occurs.

### **The Intangibles**

There are many other reasons why camp is so important. From helping a child to identify who they are as a person to building self-confidence, camp can teach so many life lessons that carry on. The intangibles that make up the character of a person are something summer camp brings out or instills in its campers: trustworthiness, being responsible, developing an ethical compass, and even empathy. These intangibles are not to be overlooked when it comes to summer camps, which amplify them to help the campers realize who they are and how important they are.

Summer camp is an amazing experience with a great responsibility to help campers grow and learn life skills and lessons. This can result in many awakenings for campers in many different areas from what they like, to how to make friends and what makes them unique. As a counselor or stakeholder in the camp world, you have a responsibility to ensure campers are getting the most from what a camp has to offer aside from the outer shell of fun in the sun. Help give them that important series of lessons and experiences that will become fundamental cornerstones in their lives so they can look back years from now and say, "I remember when camp taught me..."

Articles submitted by **Charles Silberman**, Laurel, MD.

### 5 Ideas to Keep Summer Camp Counselors Engaged & Active

In a typical summer camp program, the top priorities are always the fun and safety of the campers. However, there is a variable that is often overlooked when running a summer camp, and that is the counselors themselves. They are the ones dealing with campers the most, so their happiness and motivation will have a direct impact on the enjoyment, and even safety of the kids.



Like any profession, unhappy and uninspired counselors will tend to show poor effort and work habits. That's why it's crucial to keep your counselors engaged and full of vigor throughout the summer. This will lead to a better overall experience for campers, parents, and everyone else involved.

Here are some ideas for keeping counselors involved and active throughout the program.

### **1. Have an End of the Year “Counselor Award Banquet”**

Banquet in this scenario, can just mean a pizza party. Recognition of employee time and effort is a vital part of any healthy organization, and this will make sure your counselors know their hard work doesn't go unnoticed.

Categories don't have to be too elaborate and can be program specific, but below are some general ideas for awards:

- Best Original Craft Idea
- Best Original Physical Game/Activity
- Participation Award (counselor involved in activities, crafts, dressing up for silly holidays, etc.)
- Counselor Issue Award. (sick camper, behavior issue, any general inconvenience.)
- Counselor/Parent Communication Award

Obviously, you can tailor categories so everyone gets an award of some sort, or you can pick multiple winners for each award. You can just hand out certificates, but feel free to include gift cards to give winners. Having something like this at the end of the program will hopefully keep counselors focused and attentive on campers.

### **2. Have A Counselor Suggestion Box**

Employees, no matter the industry, want to be heard. A [suggestion box](#) gives counselors an opportunity to submit something that can let them put their personal stamp on the program. Not only that, but their ideas for improvements or alterations are invaluable, because they are the ones right in the middle of everything. Their perspective could offer a fresh take on some aspects of the camp that could be improved. If counselors feel like their opinion matters and carries weight, then in turn, they will feel a natural sense of responsibility and ownership of the overall outcome of the camp program.

As an alternative DIY option if you are on a budget and want to add some creativity, you can use a shoe box to create your own suggestion box. Personalize it with [decorative paper](#), [markers](#), [foam shapes/letters](#), [gems](#), or [stickers](#). This will allow the counselors to take ownership of the whole suggestion process.

### 3. Before the Camp Session, Have a Counselor Day Retreat

It may be hard to find a day that works due to busy schedules before the summer, but this can be combined with a counselor training day if necessary. The goal of this “retreat” to have counselors’ bond and create a team atmosphere before the campers arrive. This would usually happen over the span of the camp naturally, giving it a head start will make sure the program starts off smoothly.

Other than the [traditional icebreaker](#) and team building activities, you have the benefit of having camp equipment to use. This will break up the monotony of classic name and info sharing games. Also, this gives counselors an opportunity to familiarize themselves with camp equipment and games, that way they feel even more comfortable when they are running the activities themselves. Check out [this blog](#) for some awesome active team building activities you can use to get the counselors working together and building a rapport.



When a counselor has a connection to their coworkers it will lead to a couple of crucial things. One is that when you feel connected to someone you work with; your quality of work will stay high due to not wanting to let that person down. Also, if you are comfortable and familiar with a coworker you will begin to build a natural work flow keeping you focused on the fun and important parts of camp, instead of figuring out task delegation, etc.

### 4. Have A Counselor Picture Board

This may seem like it has nothing to do with the happiness and performance level of your counselors, but constant reminders of fun or successful moments from past camp activities can help connect the counselors. Nostalgia and reminiscence are some powerful tools for building strong bonds between a group of people.

Have the board displayed somewhere counselors often go, like around a water fountain, outside a bathroom or near where they eat meals. If a counselor is having a rough day or just feels a bit worn out, reminders of a favorite moment from camp can brighten their spirit and refocus them on why they wanted to be a camp counselor in the first place. You can even let counselors create and decorate the board themselves using [poster board](#), [multi-surface markers](#) and some [glitter glue pens](#).

Have counselors email/text photos in or create an online folder for them to upload pictures to make sure it truly feels personal to their experience. You will have to spend some time/money on this to print photos for the board, but the return on investment will be more than worth it. At the end of the program distribute the photos or create a [scrapbook](#) so all the counselors can take home their favorites.

### **5. Camper/Parent Praise System**

No matter who you are, it's nice to know when someone appreciates you. Having a system set up to get some praise back to your counselors will allow them to know that the hard work they put in, truly means something.

Email or contact parents and ask them for any personal words of praise for counselors. Most will want to do this anyway, but maybe don't know the best way to do it. By calling them, talking to them or sending them a formal email, they will now know the best way to do this.

You can funnel the praise to counselors as it comes, but it's also nice to have campers [make their own personal thank you cards](#), including a printed copy of the parent's kind words along with it. It may be a good idea to have tissues handy for when counselors read these!

View more info & ideas for summer camps on [our website!](#)



## 6 Summer Pool Game Ideas



Field trips to the pool and pool parties are a big part of summer fun for kids. We've shared some fun pool activity ideas you can use for your summer camp program, including ways to involve children that don't want to or are not ready to swim yet.

### Inflatable Tic Tac Toe

The classic game of tic tac toe – but jumbo! With an oversized and inflatable game board and pieces, this game is perfect for the pool or the lawn. Play on teams of two, or one on one. Kids that are not swimming can also play outside of the pool or toss from the side of the pool. The pieces are also two colors, blue on one side and orange on the other.

### DIY Boat Races

We love this craft kit because it has everything you need to let creators design and paint their boat. Then they can take it to the pool for a good old fashion boat race. The air from the balloon powers it across the water! Add some obstacles to create more of a challenge. Then hand out prizes to all the participants.

### Jumbo Bubble Fun

For an activity outside of the pool, plan for kids to try out this Jumbo bubble set. The wands, bubble soap, and dish are easy to transport and make for a great activity for everyone. The wands are brightly colored and come in an assortment of fun shapes.

### **Giant Rainbow Ring Toss**

This awesome ring toss is 54" tall making it fun and challenging for everyone! There are endless possibilities and pool games you can play. It comes with the base and numbered rings which can also be used as flotation devices. If you have two sets, teams can race to see who gets all rings first. As they win, they must shoot from farther away.

### **Inflatable Party Wheel**

This new pool favorite adds a new dimension to active play! Kids can crawl through it, go for a spin, or use it for climbing. There's also confetti inside the chamber edge for a fun visual sensory experience. The mix of frosted and clear heavy-duty vinyl allows kids to safely see where they are going. Holds up to 150 lbs. Get two and have students race to the finish line!

### **Mondo Mancala**

Our inflatable Mondo Mancala is one of our top games this year. It is so popular; we can barely keep it in stock! Children love the classic game of Mancala, so they will love this jumbo version even more. It is very lightweight and portable, and it comes with a bag for the balls plus an activity guide for other toss games or pool games. Also, a great activity for children who are not participating in swimming.

### **Inflatable Disc Golf**

Enjoy a game of disc golf on the lawn or in the pool. This game is fun for a whole group of players and even helps with hand-eye coordination. Aim your tossing rings or discs for the flagpole and make up your own games and scoring rules! This is a very versatile game and can be played indoors, outdoors, in the pool or on land.

## Tricks & Tips To Tie Dye



Tie dye is a great craft for summer camp. You can experiment with so many different colors and patterns. Learn tips and techniques for a successful tie dye project!

### How to Be Successful with Tie Dye

Natural fiber fabric will hold more dye, leading to a brighter, longer lasting result. You can use 100% cotton [shirts](#) or even other fun items like [scarves](#), [bandanas](#), and [draw string bags](#). We suggest pre-washing the materials if you can, for sizing and to remove any dirt so that the dye saturates better (do not use fabric softener or dryer sheets, which can leave a residue).

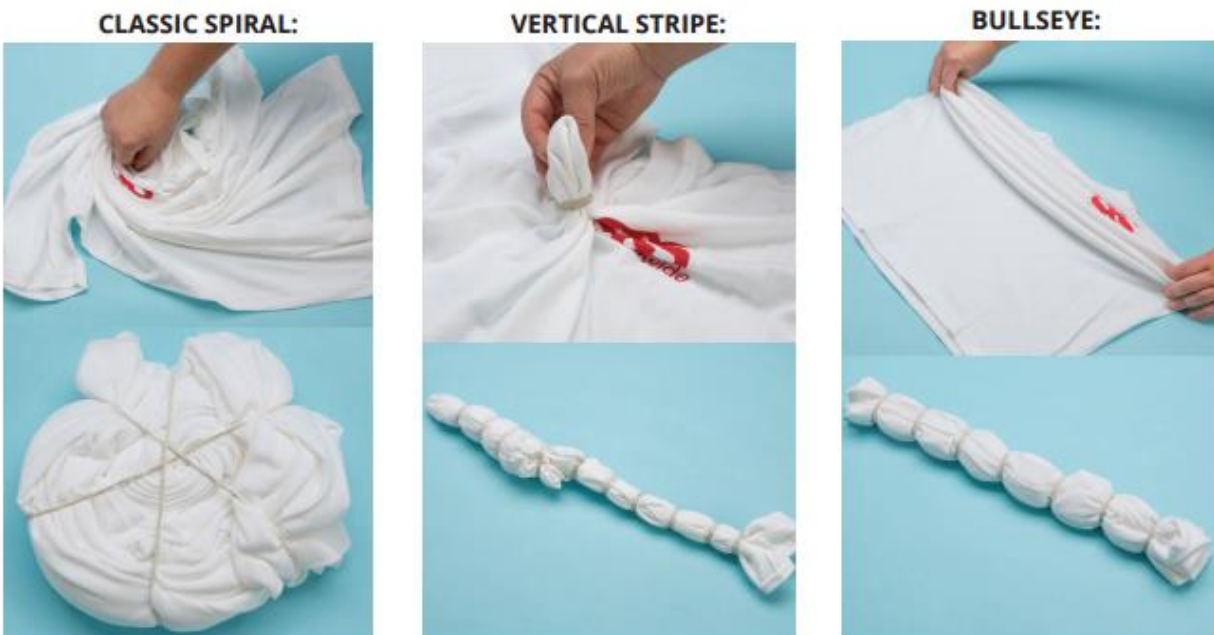
- If you pre-wash (recommended), there is no need to dry your garment. You want the fabric to be wet (but not dripping) when you tie and dye.
- Wear [gloves](#)
- Make sure that you secure all folds with rubber bands
- Tie tightly. The material will expand when it is wet, so making sure to tie each fold will secure the dye in place.

The two most important factors for a successful your tie dye are color choice and color saturation. To avoid a large amount of white on your finished product, the trick is to squirt enough dye into the folds. Squeeze the area saturated with dye to insure color penetrates the inside layers of fabric for a bold result. When choosing colors to place adjacent to each other, remember the color wheel. Do not place “opposite” colors next

to each other, such as red near green, blue near orange, or yellow near purple: the results would be a brown, muddy mess. If you really like bright colors avoid placing a color with red mixed in it, such as purple, near green.

### Tie Dye Design Techniques

- **Vertical/Horizontal Stripe:** Fold a piece of fabric in vertical pleats, and you'll end up with horizontal stripes. Horizontal pleats result in vertical stripes. Diagonal pleats are an option for diagonal stripes.
- **Bullseye:** For concentric circles, grab the cloth where you want the center to be, and pull, until you've made a long tube of garment, then apply rubber bands at intervals along the fabric.
- **Classic Spiral:** Lay the garment on a flat surface, smooth out all the wrinkles, then make a small pleat right across where you want the center to be. Grab the very center of that pleat with a clothespin and begin to twist. As you twist, pleats appear farther away from the center; as these pleats get too large, split the pleats with your hands, keeping each fold the same height above the table, no more than one to two inches in height.
- **Circles:** Another technique is to use small rubber bands to pinch and bind fabric in several places all over the garment. This will make circles of color



### Color Combination Fun:

- A lot of fuchsia and a little yellow make red
- Red and yellow make orange
- Yellow and turquoise make green
- A lot of turquoise plus a little fuchsia makes blue
- Turquoise plus fuchsia makes purple



### Mixing the Dyes:

- Always add **powder dye** to empty **squirt or spray bottles** first and then add water. Be careful when you measure out the dye. Leave the jars open as short a time as possible and use a face mask. Don't breathe in the dye powder!
- Replace bottle cap and shake until dye is fully dissolved.
- For best results, apply dye to fabric within 30 minutes of mixing.
- To help ensure the dye stays on and help prevent color bleeding, you can pre-soak the fabric for fifteen minutes to one hour in a solution of sodium carbonate (**Soda Ash**), mixed one cup per 2 gallons of water – unless you are using dyes that have the soda ash pre-mixed in.

### Applying the Dye:

- Before folding and tying your project, rinse or soak in warm water and wring out so the item is not dripping. Damp fabric will absorb the dye much more easily.
- Once you have your fabric folded/tied, lay the garment on a plastic protected surface. Squeeze the dye directly into the fabric, checking to make sure dye has penetrated into the folds. Squeeze the area you just applied dye to, so it gets into the folds. Flip over and repeat on the other side.
- Seal the dyed fabric in a plastic bag to keep wet. It should be kept in the plastic bag for 12-24 hours.

**Tip:** You can drop each fabric item into its own re-sealable plastic bag and label it with person's name and time to wash out.

- Carefully cut any rubber bands making sure not to snip your fabric. Rinse by hand in cold water before machine washing.
- Rinse first in cold water to release excess dye from the fabric, then again in the hottest water available to remove any trace of the un-reacted dye until the water runs clear.
- Now your garment should be ready for the washing machine. Wash and dry separately for the first few washes.

Watch our YouTube Video tutorial [here!](#)

## Summer Camp Guide

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