

Preparing for Camp



In addition to packing lists and form reminders we hope the following camper readiness milestones, and general camp information, will serve as guidance as you help your child prepare for the structure of the camp day and practice skills for a successful kayitz at Ramah.

PROBLEM SOLVING AND INDEPENDENCE

The camp environment provides a developmentally appropriate opportunity for increased independence and problem-solving. Support these emerging skills by looking for ways for your child to practice independence leading up to camp.

- Help create systems for keeping track of belongings
- Encourage children to look for missing items (library book, sweatshirt, water bottle, etc.) themselves rather than jumping in to find it for them
- When a child shares a challenge with a peer, a teacher, a project - first ask them how they are thinking about handling the issue, before offering a solution or advice

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

Camp involves a variety of executive functioning skills. Here are a few to practice before camp:

- Practice completing tasks from start to finish with minimal distraction (i.e. shower routine, tidying a space, setting the table)
- Practice mental flexibility regarding the ability to handle a changed schedule, not getting your way or participating in an activity, even when it's not your favorite

COMMUNAL LIVING AND SHARED SPACE

Help children understand what it means to share space with others and the importance of compromising. Use examples from your own family experiences.

- What might they enjoy? What might be new? What might bother them? What is their role in making the experience enjoyable for others? They will have a chance to form a tzrif/ohel brit (bunk communal living agreement) at the beginning of camp to discuss group norms.
 - Help children identify an independent, quiet activity (reading, sudoku, drawing, etc.) to do during down time or when they need a moment away
 - Encourage children to practice self advocating for their needs. Remind them that they can always ask for help anytime they need assistance
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PERSONAL CARE

Have children practice an independent daily self care routine that they can continue at camp.

- Brush teeth twice daily
 - Shower routine (practice taking an efficient shower that includes washing/conditioning hair, washing face and full body in a short amount of time)
 - Brush/comb/style hair
 - Clip nails
 - Apply sunscreen
 - Thorough frequent and routine handwashing
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LAUNDRY AND CLOTHING

Help children practice caring for, tracking, and organizing their clothing

- Chanichim (campers) have cubby space and hanging closet space to store their belongings. Consider a system that works for your child. Packing cubes or small baskets can be helpful to contain items.
 - Practice placing dirty laundry in a drawstring laundry bag
 - Remind children that certain items (sweatshirts, jeans, etc.) can be worn a few times before washing, while other items (socks and underwear) should be changed daily
 - Pack with your children: Chanichim should recognize their own clothing. Please be sure to label all items
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TECHNOLOGY DETOX

While screentime use continues to increase for children and teens, we remain committed to our screen-free environment at camp.

- Let children know that no personal screens/devices are allowed at camp, aside from screenless MP3 players, (our campers tell us how much they value this screen break).
 - In the weeks leading up to camp, decrease screen time, especially around bedtime, in order to prepare for a screen free summer
 - If your child decides to bring a screenless MP3 player to camp, ensure that they practice using this at home
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MORNING ROUTINE

Each morning madrichim (counselors) wake-up chanichim in a gentle way. At this time, chanichim are expected to get out of bed, brush teeth, put away pajamas and get themselves dressed. If your child struggles to wake up in the morning, practice what morning wake up will consist of at camp. If your child is an early riser, help them prepare a quiet activity they can do until kima (wake-up time). Kima for tzad alef (3rd-7th) is 7:30 am and kima for tzad bet (8th-11th) is 8:30 a.m.

NIGHTTIME ROUTINE

After peulat erev (evening activity), chanichim return to the tzrif/ohel to wash up/brush teeth and get into bed. At camp we conclude each night with harga'ah, a night time ritual that helps campers wind down and prepare for sleep. It might include madrichim reading a story, singing a song, or inviting a special guest. After the shemah, chanichim may have a few minutes of flashlight time to read or talk together. A bathroom light is left on in the bunks and there may be light noise while campers settle down for the night. If your child has trouble falling asleep, help them identify and practice some useful strategies.

EATING MEALS AT CAMP

Meals are served family style and campers sit by tzrif/ohel (bunk/tent). Help children understand what it means to eat together with other children (similar to a larger family) and how to exhibit appropriate and respectful table manners. A variety of foods is served at each meal. Help children practice eating what is served at a meal, serving themselves, and being willing to try something new. Please remind them that they should always ask for help if they are having trouble finding something to eat.

T'FILLOT

T'fillot (daily prayers) are a part of our daily community culture at Ramah. T'fillot take place in a variety of settings and formats and are designed to engage and teach campers at any level. Chanichim should come to camp understanding this component of our program and recognize that participation is always encouraged, regardless of level of familiarity.

RAMAH DIVERSITY

We are proud to be a community that includes campers and families from different geographic locations, socio-economic groups, a range of religious observance and practices, many types of family constellations, differing abilities, and so much more. We know this means that campers may encounter something new to them this summer. We invite you to talk with your camper(s) in advance of the summer about being open to new friendships, especially with campers that might seem different from them. Summer after summer we see friendships blossom out of such openness. A few talking points to you can share with your camper:

- Be open to meeting all kinds of wonderful kids, some of whom will become lifelong friends and others friendly acquaintances – but all deserving of kindness and kavod (respect).
 - Be aware that each of us likely has something about ourselves that others might be interested in asking about that we may not want to discuss. It is important to establish personal boundaries and imperative to respect the boundaries of others.
 - Turn to an adult in camp with any questions or concerns. Those adults include madrichim (counselors), Rashei edah (unit heads), yoatzot (parent liaisons), Director of Camper Care (Dr. Aviva Levine Jacobs), Marp Clinical Director (Dr. Andrea Kasowitz), Camp Director (Ariella Moss Peterseil), Executive Director (Rabbi Joe Menashe), and Tikvah Director (Elana Naftalin Kelman).
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WE CAN'T WAIT FOR AN INCREDIBLE KAYITZ TOGETHER -- SEE YOU SOON!!