

THE ULTIMATE

CAMP LEADER SURVIVAL GUIDE

A practical, encouraging guide for leading students well before, during, and after camp.

LIVING 24-7 CAMPS

LOVE GOD. LOVE OTHERS. LIVE FOR CHRIST.

Remember: You do not have to create the camp experience. Your role is to be present, prepared, prayerful, and engaged with your students.

Church: _____

Leader: _____

Camp / Dates: _____

1. BEFORE CAMP: PREPARE WITHOUT PANICKING

The best camp leaders prepare early, communicate clearly, and avoid trying to carry everything alone.

Logistics Checklist

- Confirm roster and attendance
- Collect medical / permission forms
- Confirm transportation plan
- Review camp schedule
- Know cabin assignments
- Share packing list with families

People Checklist

- Confirm medications and storage plan
- Assign adult leader responsibilities
- Communicate behavior expectations
- Identify students needing extra support
- Pray over each student by name
- Save key contact numbers

Send students and parents these reminders

- What to pack and what not to pack
- Arrival and departure times
- Medication instructions
- Technology / phone expectations
- Who to contact with questions
- What students should expect emotionally and spiritually

Leader mindset

Prepared does not mean perfect. Leave room for interruptions, unexpected emotions, weather changes, homesickness, and God to work in ways you did not plan.

2. PACKING: THE LEADER ESSENTIALS

Pack for practical needs, relational moments, and the occasional surprise.

Personal Essentials

- Bible and notebook
- Refillable water bottle
- Sunscreen and bug spray
- Comfortable shoes
- Hat / sunglasses
- Rain layer or light jacket
- Extra socks
- Small flashlight

Leader Kit

- Church / group contact list
- Printed roster and emergency info
- Pens and permanent marker
- Bandages and personal supplies
- Phone charger / battery pack
- Snacks for emergencies
- Small trash bags
- Encouragement notes or cards

3. ARRIVAL & CABIN LIFE

The first hour often sets the tone for the entire experience. Be warm, clear, and calm.

First 30 minutes in the cabin

- Welcome every student by name
- Help students identify beds and store belongings
- Review cabin boundaries and expectations
- Show bathroom, meeting, and gathering locations
- Explain how to ask for help
- Give students a simple first task
- Look for anyone standing alone or overwhelmed

Simple cabin expectations

- Respect people, property, and personal space
- Participate with a willing attitude
- Use kind words and include others
- Follow directions the first time
- Keep shared spaces clean
- Tell a leader when something feels unsafe or wrong

Use the 3 C's

Connect Know names, ask questions, notice the quiet student.	Clarify Give short, specific directions and repeat important details.	Calm Lower your voice, slow down, and model self-control.
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When the cabin gets loud

Pause. Get still. Use one clear direction. Wait for attention. Then explain the next step. Avoid competing with the noise.

4. HOMESICKNESS, ANXIETY & BIG FEELINGS

Your job is not to make every difficult feeling disappear. Your job is to help students feel safe, seen, and supported.

DO Listen without rushing. Validate the feeling. Offer two simple choices. Connect them with an appropriate leader. Pray if they are comfortable.	AVOID "You have nothing to be upset about." Making promises you cannot keep. Calling attention to their struggle publicly. Forcing them to share. Handling serious concerns alone.
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Helpful phrases

- "I'm glad you told me."
- "That makes sense. Let's take this one step at a time."
- "You are not in trouble for having a hard moment."
- "Would you rather talk here or somewhere quieter?"
- "Let's find another trusted adult who can help us."

5. SAFETY, BOUNDARIES & DISCIPLINE

Clear boundaries protect students, leaders, and the trust families place in your church.

Always follow Living 24-7 Camps and your church's established safety policies. When in doubt, involve the appropriate camp director immediately.

Responding to behavior

1. Regulate yourself

Do not correct from anger.

2. Name the behavior

Describe what happened without attacking the student's character.

3. State the expectation

Explain what needs to change.

4. Give a next step

Offer a reasonable way to repair or rejoin.

5. Communicate concerns

Document and report serious or repeated issues according to policy.

Escalate immediately when there is

- A safety threat or injury
- Bullying, harassment, or suspected abuse
- A student missing or unaccounted for
- A medical or mental-health emergency
- A disclosure that requires mandated reporting
- Any situation you cannot safely manage alone

6. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Students do not need a perfect leader. They need a leader whose life and words point them toward Jesus with humility and consistency.

- Pray before you speak and serve
- Participate rather than only supervise
- Make room for questions and doubt
- Avoid using shame or pressure to produce a response
- Connect Scripture to real life
- Celebrate growth that may be quiet or unseen
- Model confession, forgiveness, gratitude, and worship

Conversation starters for spiritual moments

- "What stood out to you?"
- "What question are you still thinking about?"
- "Where do you see that in everyday life?"
- "What might trusting Jesus look like this week?"
- "How can I pray for you?"

7. A SIMPLE DAILY LEADER RHYTHM

Use this as a quick reset before the day begins and before lights out.

Morning Reset

- Pray for your students
- Review the schedule
- Check supplies and responsibilities
- Identify students to intentionally connect with
- Choose one attitude to model

Evening Reset

- Celebrate one student
- Check for students on the margins
- Share concerns with the right person
- Reflect on what worked and what did not
- Pray and rest instead of replaying everything

The 3-question check-in

- Who needs encouragement today?
- Who might be struggling quietly?
- What is one small way I can help a student feel known?

8. BUS, TRANSITION & WAITING-TIME IDEAS

Waiting time does not have to become wasted time. Keep a few low-prep options ready.

- Would You Rather: camp edition
- 5-Second Challenge
- Two Truths and a Lie
- This or That
- One-word story
- Silent line-up
- Favorite camp moment
- High / low / hope: one good thing, one hard thing, one thing you hope for

Leader tip

Have a short activity ready, but do not feel pressured to fill every quiet moment. Sometimes students need space to rest, talk, or simply sit together.

9. WHEN YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED

Pause and remember: you are serving alongside a team. Ask for help early, not only after you reach your limit.

- Take a breath and lower your pace
- Ask another leader to cover a task
- Drink water and eat when you can
- Bring a concern to the camp/church leadership team
- Release what is outside your control
- Remember that faithfulness is not the same as perfection

A short prayer

“Jesus, help me love these students well. Give me wisdom, patience, courage, and joy. Help me notice the student who needs extra care and trust You with what I cannot control. Amen.”

10. DEPARTURE & FOLLOW-THROUGH

Finish well. The ride home and the days after camp can be important moments for reflection and connection.

- Confirm every student is accounted for
- Check cabins and common areas
- Return borrowed items
- Confirm medications and personal belongings
- Share departure information with families
- Thank camp staff and volunteers
- Check in with students who had a difficult experience

After camp: keep the conversation going

- Ask students what they want to remember
- Invite them to share one takeaway
- Follow up with students who made commitments or asked questions
- Plan a church-based next step
- Celebrate stories of growth without pressuring students to perform
- Thank parents and invite feedback

11. QUICK REFERENCE: WRITE IT DOWN

Camp Director / Main Contact:	_____
Church Leader:	_____
Medical / First Aid Contact:	_____
Emergency Meeting Location:	_____
Transportation Contact:	_____
Other Important Notes:	_____

FINAL REMINDER

Your students may not remember every activity, message, or schedule detail. They may remember that you noticed them, listened to them, included them, and pointed them toward Jesus.

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