

Counselor Handbook

Working at Camp



As a Counselor or Junior Counselor, this section will help you prepare for an exciting week at Meadowlodge Bible Camp. Please read it through carefully, and be sure to ask your director if you need anything explained.

Here are some of the things that you should think about as you prepare for camp, and also during the camp week.

BEFORE YOU COME TO CAMP

- 1) Find out about the camp from former campers, staff, etc...
- 2) Complete and submit the staff application form.
- 3) Read through the Counselor Handbook and any other material suggested by the director.
- 4) Be able to support the camp's mission statement and goals.
- 5) Know what the director expects of you. Become familiar with any goals the director may establish.
- 6) Determine what special things you will need to bring with you.
- 7) Locate and make use of helpful reading material.
- 8) Set personal goals. What are you wishing to accomplish at camp?
- 9) Pray about the camp week and the campers that will be in your care.
- 10) Attend the staff training day in early June.

ITEMS TO PRAY FOR

Before going to camp and while at camp, it is important to be praying about the kids and the week. It is also helpful to ask others that you know or at your church to be praying for you and your campers as well. Some of the things to pray for:

- 1) That God draws the campers to Him (John 6:44)
- 2) That the campers seek to know God (Acts 17:27, Deut 4:29)
- 3) That the campers believe the Scriptures (1 Thess 2:13, Rom 10:17)
- 4) That Satan is bound from blinding them to the truth. (Matt 13:19, 2 Cor 4:4)
- 5) That the Holy Spirit works in them (John 16:8-13)
- 6) That the campers believe in Christ as Saviour (John 1:12, 5:24)
- 7) That the campers turn from sin (Acts 3:19, 17:30,31)
- 8) That the campers confess Christ as Lord (Rom 10:9-10)
- 9) That the campers yield all to follow Christ (2 Cor 5:15, Phil 3:7-8)
- 10) That the campers take root and grow in Christ (Col 2:6-7)

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THINGS TO BRING TO CAMP

Some counselors have collected different items over the years to help them through a variety of situations. Remember, the sun does not always shine at camp, or there may be free time in the cabins, so there may be times when you have to improvise with your campers. Here are some of the things that people collect and bring to camp for such occasions. Don't worry if you don't have any of it – you will learn to improvise.

- 1) "Trunk" - a pleasure chest, tickle trunk, a big suitcase.
- 2) Stationary - masking tape, stapler, glue stick, pens, pencils (& sharpener), felt pens, labels, string, paper.
- 3) Skit Kit - ideas/scripts (try to have a biblical message because skits tend to get out of hand), sunglasses, kazoo, wigs.
- 4) Toys - hacky sack, puzzle games.
- 5) Essentials - Alarm clock, flashlight, Kleenex, bandages, air freshener, Study Bible (Concordance), camera, watch.
- 6) Activities - paper games, puzzles, contest (jelly bean jar).
- 7) Ziploc Bags - "green" garbage bags, and "Safeway" bags for wet clothing.
- 8) Help a Director - Notebook with songs, wide games, rainy day activities.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT CAMP

- 1) Get to know the other members of the staff. You are a team, so avoid cliques.
- 2) Familiarize yourself with camp routines and facilities.
- 3) Be well acquainted with camp rules, and know the emergency procedures.
- 4) Check the cabin prior to campers' arrival to make sure it is in good shape.
- 5) Settle in to your cabin; make it feel like home for you and the campers.
- 6) Be ready to meet campers when they start arriving at 6 p.m. Sunday evening (registration time). Please make arrangements with your Director if you can't be there before 6 p.m.
- 7) Remember your personal appearance. First impressions are important when you are meeting campers and their parents.
- 8) When campers arrive, take them and their parents to the cabin. Introduce them to the other campers and indicate where they might choose to sleep. Indicate the buildings of interest, what the first scheduled activity is, and what they may do until then.
- 9) Help campers get settled, and help them with their luggage.
- 10) Acquaint your campers with rules regarding swimming, toilets, mealtime, personal cleanliness and inspection each day. Care of camp property, trees etc.

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How you behave during the week will have a great impact on your campers and on the other camp staff. Here are some important things to think about as the week progresses.

The First Day

- 1) Learn the campers' names.
- 2) Take you campers on a tour of camp.
- 3) Include and involve in the group those individuals who are feeling insecure or uncomfortable.
- 4) Set high standards for campers' behaviour and manners. Right from the first campers are testing how far they can go.

Getting Up

- 1) Talk up the day, so campers begin to look forward to the day regardless of the weather.
- 2) Be on time.
- 3) Look smart, alert, be in a cheerful frame of mind.

Bedtime

- 1) Slowing down, people can't switch from active to inactive quickly.
- 2) Allot time to allow excitement to gradually wear off.
- 3) Discuss the day with the campers. Ask questions such as: "what is the best thing that happened to you today", "what upset you the most", "what did you learn", "what did you not understand"?
- 4) Conduct devotions in an orderly fashion.
- 5) Lights out on time.

The Last Day

- 1) Begin to get their belongings together.
- 2) Clean the cabin for the following week.
- 3) Make sure campers have some clean clothes left to go home in.
- 4) Have campers help with additional chores as requested by the director.
- 5) Remember to greet the camper's parents, whenever possible, and say good-bye to the campers.
- 6) Don't leave camp, unless you have permission from the director, until all of your campers have been picked up.
- 7) Complete any evaluation forms you are given before leaving the camp at the completion of camp. Leave them in the box in the staff lounge.

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SELF-EVALUATION

At the end of camp, you will be asked to complete some evaluation forms about the camp. This is your opportunity to give feedback and suggestions that will help to improve the camping experience for everyone. Your director will give you the forms, and instructions on how to complete them.

In addition, the end of the camp week is a good time to privately evaluate your performance in the camp situation and the extent to which goals established at the beginning of camp have been realized, i.e. Success in assuming responsibility, carrying out assignments, functioning as a reliable and productive member of the overall camp staff. You don't have to share this information with anyone else.

- 1) Was the summer all that you hoped it would be in terms of personal enjoyment, growth, learning, or career related outcomes?
- 2) Were you open to learning new social and recreational skills and values?
- 3) How did you function with children under your charge? Were you responsible and mature in day-to-day guidance of children? Did you show enthusiasm and positive energy in carrying out various assigned tasks? Did you play favourites or give less of yourself to less attractive or more troublesome campers. When problems occurred, did you get involved, lending support and understanding to campers?
- 4) Did you show loyalty, co-operativeness, and responsibility in working with the camp director, other staff at camp? Did you contribute actively to camp life getting fully involved, or hang on fringe as a passive participant or spectator in any planning or problem solving group sessions.
- 5) What did you learn about yourself during the week? You should try to verbalize the summer's outcomes in concise, objective terms, and take responsibility for what has happened. Try to define goals for the future, both to build on the positive changes that have taken place and to recognize problem areas and determine to remedy those with plans and goals for the future.
- 6) Look forward. Will you want to go back this camp? Do you want to be a Counselor with a different age group, or try a different staff position?

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SOME OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER

As they gain experience, Counselors discover that they get involved in a lot of very different situations. Here are a few of the things you might run into during your week.

Group Discussions

The following points will help you to lead group discussions:

- 1) The campers should sit comfortably in a face-to-face position, preferably a circle so they can all see each other.
- 2) The problem or project to be discussed should be clearly presented, so all campers present understand what the purpose or focus of the discussion is.
- 3) In opening the discussion, the leader should stress that the views of all are welcome and that everyone should take part. Maintain eye contact with everyone. Discussion should be kept relevant to the topic under discussion rather than ramble. The leader should strive to have discussion occur among the members of the group, rather than between the group members and himself. Do not dominate the discussion. When asking a question, ask the whole group initially rather than putting it to just one person.
- 4) The Counselor should summarize what has been said from time to time, or point out contradictions in the discussion and ask for further views.
- 5) Discussion should be brought to close without dragging on excessively. If there are some unanswered questions, these should be mentioned, and the suggestion made that they be dealt with at future meetings.

Suggestions on how to deal with different types of campers

Talkers - Use an object, whoever is holding it has the floor, Counselor determines time limit.

Poor Listeners - Make eye contact, give personal explanation of expectations and have camper repeat what you have said in his/her own words with commitment to co-operate.

Challenger - Have a private discussion with the challenger about their attitude, if you do not see an immediate change, give over to the director. Do not discuss with an audience.

Cling On - Be gentle but fair, no special favours or treatment. Try to partner camper up with another camper.

Bed Wetter - Unusual, but if so get everyone to air their sleeping bags at the same time.

Theft - Give the thief a way out, private conversation, try to turn a negative into a positive.

Asthma - Campers on lower bunks are more exposed to the "triggers" than those on upper bunks.

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RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Other sections of this manual talk about the rules and responsibilities that you have while at camp. Here are a few of the more common things that you need to be aware of.

- 1) The Counselor is responsible for all campers in his/her cabin twenty four hours a day.
- 2) The morning, evening devotions for your campers will be your responsibility. Encourage campers to take part.
- 3) In the dining room take your place at the end of your table. Look out for food waste. Talk quietly to campers and do not allow them to talk in a loud voice or shout.
- 4) Each table is responsible for their own dishes. Choose three campers on rotation to do the dishes and re-set the table at each meal. Your supervision here will greatly assist the kitchen personnel.
- 5) Greet with enthusiasm every activity of the camp and magnify its importance in the eyes of the campers. Your enthusiasm will become their enthusiasm.
- 6) Promptness is very important at meals and other activities.
- 7) Proper rest is important for all campers. Lights out and cabin quiet time should be strictly enforced. Counselors are required to retire with the campers. A patrol system will help you in controlling the cabin. Be firm in dealing with distracting questions, but be ready to answer honest ones which may help to bring a boy or girl to Jesus Christ.
- 8) Physical force is not used in this camp as a means of discipline. There may be times when a camper needs to be dealt with forcibly, but this should be left to the Director.
- 9) Encourage campers to participate in all camp activities. The over-all program can only be successful if all campers take part. No one is to be exempted without special reason or parental request.
- 10) Report all "real" injuries to the Nurse/First Aider.