



Off to Camp

As we ease toward spring and start to dream of summer, many Minnesota kids are looking forward to camp as part of their summer fun. But how do you know if your child is ready to leave you and head off into the woods for a week or more? And if your child is a first-time camper – or even an old-timer going to a new camp for the first time – how can you help to make sure this year’s camping experience is the best it can be?

I. When is a child ready to go to “sleep-away” camp?

- There’s no magic age at which a child is ready, but there are readiness signs to watch for:
 - Comfortable being away from home overnight
 - Expresses needs and feelings clearly to others
 - At ease around new people
 - Interested in the adventure of going to camp
- Day camp is a good first step for many younger kids who are not ready for overnight camp. Or a family camp also is a good first option, especially for a young child still reluctant to be away from parents.

II. Once you decide your child is ready, how can you help your child prepare for this new adventure?

- Involve the child in choosing the camp and planning
- Practice separations from home
- Talk about what to expect at camp
- Make a “home-sickness plan”
- Pack a little bit of home to take along