

# Questions To Ask Camp Directors

When you receive a camp's brochure, you will invariably have questions for the camp director. Get to know the camp director as a person through telephone conversations, correspondence, and a personal visit. Have the director describe the camp's philosophy and how the staff implements it.

**What is the camp's philosophy and program emphasis?** Each camp has its own method of constructing programs based on its philosophy. Does it complement your own parenting philosophy?

**What is the camp director's background?** American Camp Association (ACA) minimum standards recommend directors possess a bachelor's degree, have completed in-service training within the past three years, and have at least sixteen weeks of camp administrative experience before assuming the responsibilities of director.

**What training do counselors receive?** At a minimum, camp staff should be trained in safety regulations, emergency procedures and communication, behavior management techniques, child abuse prevention, appropriate staff and camper behavior, and specific procedures for supervision.

**What is the counselor-to-camper ratio?** ACA standards require different ratios for varying ages and special needs.

**What are the ages of the counselors?** ACA standards recommend that 80 percent or more of the counseling/program staff be at least eighteen years old. Staff must be at least sixteen years old and be at least two years older than the campers with whom they work.

**What are desired qualities in camp staff?** The same qualities of trustworthiness and dependability sought by any employer are valued commodities in camp employees.

**What percentage of the counselors returned from last year?** Most camps have from 40-60 percent returning staff. If the rate is lower, find out why.

**How are behavioral and disciplinary problems handled?** This is where the director's philosophy comes through loud and clear. Positive reinforcement, assertive role modeling and a sense of fair play are generally regarded as key components of camp counseling and leadership.

**How does the camp handle special needs?** If your child has special requirements, ask the camp director about needed provisions and facilities.

**How does the camp handle homesickness and other adjustment issues?** Again, the camp's philosophy on helping children adjust is important. Be sure you are comfortable with the camp's guidelines on parent/child contact.

**What about references?** This is generally one of the best ways to check a camp's reputation and service record. Directors should be happy to provide references.

**Does the American Camp Association accredit the camp?** It is only logical that members of your family attend an ACA-accredited camp. Accreditation visitors ask the questions—300 of them—regarding essential health, safety, and program quality issues important to a camp's overall operation.

Visit [www.CampParents.org](http://www.CampParents.org), a family resource offering expert advice from camp professionals on camp selection, readiness, child and youth development, and issues of importance to families.

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\*Side Bar to article: *Letting Go—Parents and Camps Foster Children's Self-Reliance*

