

Cabin Leader's Guide to



Camp Grady Spruce Outdoor Education Program

Mailing Address:

**YMCA Camp Grady Spruce
Attn: Outdoor Education
(Name of School and Student)
3000 Park Road 36
Graford, TX 76449**

Mission of the Y

**To put Christian values into practice through programs that build
healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.**

Mission of Camp Grady Spruce

**To deliver exceptional outdoor programs that inspire, build and
strengthen relationships with God, His creation and each other**

Introduction

Welcome to Camp Grady Spruce Outdoor Education Program. The Cabin Leader's Guide should help you prepare for your stay at camp with a cabin of children. The goal of the guide is to help you understand the program, establish your role, and to give you tips on how to be a cabin leader while enjoying your stay. The guide contains rules, guidelines for discipline, procedures, schedules, and most importantly, hints to ensure success as a cabin leader.

The purpose of this guide is to help you, but it cannot be the last word on working with the children in your cabin. Your best resource is the classroom teacher. They have the most experience working with your group of children, and the final responsibility for these children ultimately rests with them. They want to help you have a successful experience. Please call on the teachers for support.

As a cabin leader, you are a very special person at this program. You will be taking on a lot of responsibility for the children in your cabin. The classroom teachers and the Outdoor Education Staff appreciate your commitment and effort in working with the children.

Outdoor Education

Outdoor education is school outside the classroom. Of course, there is more to it and this section of the guide will briefly describe outdoor education at this Camp.

The philosophy of Outdoor Education at Camp Grady Spruce is:

This program is designed to effectively utilize the out-of-doors to facilitate and enrich learning related to the school curriculum and to life.

The program objectives are:

- 1. To help students understand and experience the relationship between themselves and their environment.**
- 2. To support all the components of the students' curriculum: science, social studies, math, language arts, arts, music, and others in the outdoors.**
- 3. To give students a change to succeed in a positive non-graded environment.**
- 4. To develop self-confidence and self-respect and to develop an appreciation of their own worth as individuals.**
- 5. To strengthen social relationships through respect for others, cooperation, and friendship.**
- 6. To have a safe, fun, and memorable experience.**

This site for education outside the classroom happens to be a camp. The cabins are rustic although they do have modern bathroom facilities and heat. The camp outside the cabin area has not been developed, thus enabling children to experience the natural environment as they walk the trails. Wild animals are not always easy to see, but children can spot them if they are quiet and careful. Do not let that get in the way of remembering this is still school, just in a different environment. The teachers lead academic outdoor activities that relate to what the students are doing in school. All lessons are based on Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills of the Texas School Curriculum.

The naturalists teach concepts and skills in the outdoors in a fun, active, hands-on way. There are things students can best learn outdoors in all subject areas. For example, the best way to have the students write a descriptive paragraph is to have them describe something in front of them that has their interest; like a lizard or a beautiful scene.

Cabin leaders are often asked to go along on activities to assist the teachers with the outdoor lessons. You can be a big help to the naturalist by being an extra set of eyes and ears when the children need control, and by getting the children excited and involved in the activity when they need a little encouragement.

Cabin Leaders Role

The cabin leaders have a key role at Camp. You are expected to provide leadership and supervision for seven to nine children in your cabin. Specifically, you are expected to:

1. Know where every child assigned to your cabin is at all times.
2. Provide a safe and healthy living environment in the cabin.
3. Make sure the children get to meals, activities and duties on time.
4. Supervise the children during cabin and hopper duties.
5. Supervise any free-time.
6. Sit at a dining hall table with children and supervise meals.
7. Help to remind children to follow rules when in large groups.
8. Assist teachers during activities.
9. You must always be with students when they are near the water.

There are other general roles that you will play as a cabin leader. Specific duties that will help you to enjoy your stay are covered in detail in the "Procedures" and "Hints for Success" sections of this guide.

The busiest part of your job is when the children are alone with you. These times are in the cabin, between activities, and during cabin duties. You will be in the cabin at night, around mealtimes, and during rest periods. It will seem like you are on your own, but the classroom teacher and other cabin leaders are around to help you if you need assistance.

A major part of your job as a cabin leader is being a good role model. The children will watch you for clues and hints about how they can behave. If you are excited about being at Camp, the children will also be excited.

If you think a rule is important, the children will follow. A great example is the raised hand for getting quiet. If you talk when it is time to be quiet, the children will talk. The children will test you at times to see what rules are important and what they can do before you set limits. Be firm, consistent, and fair and the children will generally stay within these limits. Of course, there will be special problems that will need to be handled with patience, humor, and understanding. The classroom teacher is always there for the problems you feel you need help with.

The following "Hints for Success" should help you better understand your role. If you have any questions about your role, feel free to ask the classroom teachers. They will let you know what they expect from you.

Guidelines for Discipline

Outdoor Education at Camp Grady Spruce has some specific guidelines concerning the discipline of children at Camp. If you have any questions about these guidelines please ask the site director or the classroom teacher. Since this is a school program, all school policies and rules relating to discipline apply. Many of these guidelines are for your protection as well as the child's protection.

There are some things you can do early in the week to take care of half of your discipline duties before the problems occur. Make sure you and the students set rules early in the experience, hopefully within the first half hour you are here. Explain why the rules are important and why we have specific rules. Then enforce the rules fairly and consistently from the start. Be firm. A child is going to test you within the hour to see how you stand on the rules. Let that child know that he broke a rule and that you don't want it to happen again. All the children will get the message that you think rules are important. This will not solve all your problems, but it will get you off to a good start.

Once everything gets going there are more techniques to help you through the week. Recognize positive behaviors and attitudes. So often, when the children realize they can get attention by being good, they will not resort to getting attention by being bad. Be consistent how you enforce rules and what consequences you administer. The children will know right away if you favor someone.

Stand your ground. The children will learn quickly to ignore your authority if there are no consequences to their actions. This means only use disciplinary measures that you are ready and able to immediately follow-up on. "Time-outs" work wonders, as children do not like to be away from their friends for very long.

When a child needs more than a "time-out", take the child to a classroom teacher. The teacher will know what is appropriate for the child, including the possibility of sending that child home early. When disciplining a child, focus on the child's negative behavior and not on the child himself. Say "John, other people cannot listen when you are talking out of turn." That way the child knows exactly what he is doing wrong. You may never use physical force or deny food as punishment to discipline a child. Before it gets to this point, call a classroom teacher.

Deal with problems away from an audience, but do not take a child where no one else can see you. Do not leave yourself open to accusations of abuse. If you go to talk with a child, make sure that another adult can see both you and the child while you talk.

Remember you are a role model. If you lead children into trouble, such as raids or pillow fights, they are going to get the message that these behaviors are

acceptable, in actuality they are getting into serious trouble. Your actions will speak louder than any rules you can talk to them about.

Please refer to the classroom teacher if you need help with a specific problem or if you have just reached the end of your rope. They are the final authority on disciplining the children from their school. They have worked with “groups” of children for a while and they have all kinds of great tips for solving discipline problems.

Rules

Because this is a school program, all of the school rules apply to the students during their Outdoor Education experience. There are some additional rules that Camp Grady Spruce has to address such as students living at Camp around the clock, safety rules, and consideration rules.

Safety Rules

- No child is allowed near the lake or on the docks without adult supervision.
- Swimming is allowed only in the swimming area and only with a YMCA lifeguard during a scheduled activity time.
- No wading unless wearing a PFD (life jacket) during a supervised activity.
- The cabin leaders must know where all of their children are at all times.
- No rough games in the cabins.
- No throwing stones.
- No one is allowed in the horse corral.
- Row boating and canoeing are allowed only with a YMCA lifeguard during a scheduled activity time.
- No running.

Consideration Rules

- The cabin leader is in charge at all times. What they say goes.
- Respect each other’s privacy, no raiding.
- Lights go out at 10:00PM and children get quiet.
- Please respect all living things; do not collect any plants or animals.

Hints for Success

When you first arrive:

To insure a positive experience, there are some things you can do immediately to set up your week for a positive experience. First impressions are important, and if you start out good your week will end great!

When you arrive at Camp the first thing you will do is move into your cabin. You will only have about half-an-hour, so use your time wisely. The first conflict the children might have is who sleeps upstairs or downstairs. Set up a simple lottery, the child with #1 picks first, and so on, or assign beds to children to avoid this first conflict. You, as the cabin leader, would be better choosing a bed downstairs by the door to monitor who comes in and out.

During the first half-hour, learn and use the children's names right away. You may want to use names tags or put the children's names on their beds. Names are power. It is a lot easier to get James' attention by using his name than shouting, "Hey you!"

Have the students help you set cabin rules. If they have a say in the rules, they take ownership of them and seem to obey them. Write them down on a large sheet of paper and post them. You will need to enforce the rules fairly and consistently right away so the children know their limits. The children will live up to expectations and standards if they know what the rules are and how serious you are about them.

Set up a cabin buddy system where everyone in the cabin has a specific buddy whom they can go everywhere with. If you are in an activity and a student needs to use the bathroom, you can send him/her with his/her buddy. The buddy system keeps children from wandering off by themselves, and cuts the number of "units" you need to track them down in half. The students also become responsible for each other, which is an important social goal.

Nighttime:

During evenings in the cabins before the lights go out, you, as cabin leader, will want to create a low-key atmosphere. Sleep is important for the health and positive attitude of the children. If they do not sleep at night, they will be more difficult to live with and will be out of control during the day making your job much more difficult. The activities during the day will tire them out enough so they will sleep at night if you set the right atmosphere.

Give the children ample time to get ready for bed, but not one minute more. Remind each child to brush their teeth, get cleaned up, and go to the bathroom before you

put out the lights. Make sure each child is in their own bed and then turn out the lights on time. If they know how much time they have to do a job they will complete it in that amount of time. If you give them 20 minutes, they will take 20 minutes. If you give them an hour, they will take an hour and possibly get into trouble doing so.

Right before or after lights go out, do a quiet activity to create a quiet atmosphere. Activities like reading out-loud from appropriate books like "The Lorax" by Dr. Seuss work well. Students often bring books you can read at night, but be sure to screen them in advance. Singing quietly works if you have that skill. Telling quiet stories works also as long as you stay away from ghost stories. Ghost stories just guarantee a sleepless night for the children and their cabin leader.

Stay away from rowdy activities like pillow fights and raids. These activities rile-up the children and you will have to work twice as hard to get them to sleep. These activities can also destroy property and cause personal injury. They may also ruin someone's experience at Camp if something important gets broken or if they have to go home early because of an injury. Rowdy activities have their place, but not before bedtime in the cabin.

During the Week:

Check with the teacher to learn about any special needs that your children may have and plan for it. When it happens, you will be ready instead of having to react to a surprise.

This may be the first time some of your children have ever been away from home. Keep them busy and give all of them some individual attention and they should be fine. Use the classroom teacher's assistance to help the children who are extremely homesick. The first night is the worst; they are usually fine the rest of the week.

If you find yourself in the cabin with nothing scheduled to do, find an activity you can all do as a group. Children love games, so think of some of the games that you played as a child (Elbow tag, Freeze tag, kick-ball, etc.). Games that involve running around are great during the day if you have adequate time. Pick a game that will keep everyone involved. A short exploration hike close to camp is good if you feel comfortable walking around with your children. The children often bring balls and other games with them so let them share these "toys" with others in the cabin if time allows.

Maintain a positive attitude and generate enthusiasm throughout the week and the children will follow your lead. Provide for a spirit of cooperation and pitch in yourself without doing everything for the children. They will appreciate seeing you work, and their attitude toward work will be better.

Procedures

Hopper Duty (Table set-up in the dining hall)

- Arrive 20 minutes before the meal.
- Set-up cups, napkins, drinks and anything else the kitchen needs set on the tables. Outdoor educator will be there to assist you.
- Stay after the meal to sweep the floor.

Fire Drill

- Drill signal is a continuous ringing of the bell or three car horn blasts.
- Everyone goes to the area specified for your site to meet with their cabin group.
- Center staff will ask cabin leaders if everyone from their cabin is present.

Accident

- If you are by yourself, send two children to get the nearest adult for help.
- Remove children not involved away from victim and keep them under adult supervision.
- One adult will always stay with the victim. If no extra adults are available, send two children to get the classroom teacher or site director.

Severe Weather

- Center staff will notify teachers in case of severe weather watches.
- Cabins are the safest place to be in severe weather.

Missing Person

- Notify the classroom teacher and the site director immediately.
- Search the Camp thoroughly.
- Question friends and cabin mates to see if they know where the person is.
- The classroom teacher and site director will organize a more thorough search, and will contact authorities as necessary.
- Activities for the students will proceed as normally as possible.

Policies

- **Outdoor Education rates are set by the YMCA Camp Grady Spruce Board of Managers. Rates for Outdoor Education include lodging, meals, and program services. These rates are applicable during the school calendar year and on weekdays only. Rates do not include transportation to and from YMCA Camp Grady Spruce and school. Rates are subject to change.**
- **No firearms, fireworks, alcoholic beverages, or illegal drugs are allowed on the premises.**
- **No pets or animals of any kinds are allowed at Camp, and anyone bringing them will be asked to leave.**
- **Motor homes, mobile homes, camping trailers, tent camping, motorcycles, mini-bikes, and hunting are not permitted at Camp.**
- **No collecting of any living things from the natural environment. Dead things may be collected for special projects, and any material not used must be returned to the environment.**
- **Fires may be built only in designated fireplaces. (Obtain permission from camp staff first!)**
- **Do not remove road posts. Drive only on designated roads.**
- **Please leave your cabin cleaner than when you found it. Notify the director if any of the equipment or facilities need repair.**
- **Smoking is not allowed inside any buildings or in front of the children. (Designated smoking area is within the dumpster fence behind the dining halls).**