

Getting Ready for Camp (Without Overbuying)

A quick guide to help you know what to buy ahead of time, what to confirm with the camp, and what's better to wait on — so you don't overspend or overpack.



Decisions to Make Before Camp Starts

Worth Buying in Advance

These are used often, easy to test at home, and unlikely to go to waste.

- Backpack your child can carry comfortably
- Water bottle they can open, close, and refill independently
- Lunch and snack containers they can manage on their own
- Sunscreen your child already tolerates and knows how to use
- A hat they'll actually wear

Buying these early lets kids practice – and prevents last-minute panic buying.

Check With the Camp First

These vary widely by camp type, age group, and daily flow.

- How often extra clothes are actually needed
- Whether swimsuits, towels, or special shoes are required – and how often
- How sunscreen and bathroom breaks are handled
- What stays at camp vs. what comes home each day
- How kids are told what gear they need on a given day

A five-minute conversation here can prevent weeks of unnecessary packing.



Where Overbuying Usually Happens

Day Camp vs. Sleepaway

Day Camp

- Overbuying comes from daily friction
- Preparing for every possible scenario
- Variability between days drives “just in case” purchases

Sleepaway Camp

- Overbuying comes from front-loading decisions
- Too much variety creates confusion
- Camp systems often reduce the need for extras

Younger Kids vs. Older Kids

Younger Kids

- Overbuying comes from anticipation.
- Extra clothes and backups feel safer than they often are
- Parents prepare before knowing the routine

Start with less. Add only once you see what's actually used.

Overbuying comes from assumptions.

- Buying multiples before knowing real usage
- Purchasing gear based on interest, not daily reality
- Replacing items too early “to be prepared”

Wait, observe, and let use – not guesswork – guide purchases.

What to Wait On

These are the most common sources of regret.

- Multiple outfits bought weeks in advance
- Activity-specific gear before you know frequency
- Backup items without understanding the daily flow

Things usually become clearer after the first few days of camp.

A Quick Reminder

You don't need to get everything right before day one.

The goal isn't perfect packing – it's avoiding unnecessary buying and leaving room to adjust once camp actually begins.

