



How to Prepare Your Child for Camp After a Year of COVID-19

We are so excited to welcome your child to Camp Alonim this summer!

Our world has changed in so many ways since the last time we saw your kids, and given the challenges of the past year, we know that this summer will be different and that the transition to camp may be both remarkably exciting and incredibly difficult. COVID-19 has had a profound effect on all of us, and we are committed to making everything this summer as safe, smooth, and fun as possible.

We are here to support you and your family. Below are some suggestions to help you and your camper prepare for an amazing Alonim summer.

Technology:

This year many of us have become dependent on technology. From distance learning to zoom video calls and meetings to watching our favorite shows, electronics have become a mainstay of our lives. It is wonderful that we have technology that has allowed us to stay connected and help us through this incredibly challenging year.

At camp, though, we like to be unplugged and away from our devices and screens such as phones, tablets, computers, etc. We feel strongly about the positive impact of technology-free summers on our campers and the opportunity for us to connect face-to-face and build real-world relationships and experiences. Even in a typical summer, moving away from technology is a challenge for some and we know that this year will be even harder.

In order to ease dependence on technology, we strongly suggest starting to gradually decrease and limit the amount of time your children are using devices and/or looking at screens. Engage your child in this process in order to help them be aware of their technology use habits and feel some ownership of the process. Some things to try are having no screens at mealtimes and turning off and putting away devices at least an hour before bed. Your camper will be much better off (less agitated, more able to connect socially, etc.) in the first few days of camp if they are prepared for the transition, have started decreasing technology use at home, and have experienced technology free times in the lead up to camp. The face to face social interaction will be an incredibly rewarding part of their experience at camp and we look forward to immersing them in a technology free world.

Social Interaction:

We know that many children have had limited in-person social interaction over the past year. While we know that many kids have been socializing virtually, it is not the same as in person social interaction. If you haven't done so already, we recommend that you arrange times where your children can interact with peers in a way that is safe for you and your family -- whether that is at school, in your backyard, or at an extracurricular activity. The face-to-face interaction will help ease anxiety and support the transition into living in a group communal space. Talking with your child about the differences between living at home and living in a communal space with peers can help your child and prepare them for a summer of close personal interaction after this more isolated year.

Family Time:

While we recognize the tremendous benefit of families having more time at home together over the last year, we know that this may make the transition away from family to camp a little more difficult. Depending on your family situation, it could be necessary to encourage your child to spend time without parents, siblings, pets, or other relatives to prepare them to engage in activities without their family present.

Safely going to a friend's house, playing outdoors, and/or extracurricular activities will allow campers some time to re-establish their independence. Talk with your child about not having parents or other family members immediately available and how that will feel for them. Remind them that their counselors will be there to support them and guide them at camp and they can write letters home and receive letters from home every day if they want or need.

Bedtime Routines:

Bedtime can be one of the hardest times of the day for campers. This year in particular, sleeping in a bunk with others around will be a big change for many campers. Our counselors work hard to set up bedtime routines for their bunks and prepare activities such as guitar playing, book reading, or meditation that help their campers settle down and get ready for bed. If bedtime is a concern, talk with your child about their bedtime routine and find ways to build independence and skills prior to coming to camp. Campers are more than welcome (and in fact encouraged) to bring stuffed animals, pillows, blankets, pictures, or other comfort items that may help them feel safe and get a good night's sleep. However, we do not allow technology or music devices during bedtime (or anytime) at camp. If your child is used to using technology to help them fall asleep, please try to wean them off of reliance on these devices to facilitate the transition to a camp bedtime routine without them.

Food Habits:

We have heard from several families that children have had access to food all day long while distance learning at home during the pandemic. We suggest that you help your child prepare for three scheduled meals a day with limited snacking in the weeks leading up to camp. In addition to our three scheduled meals a day, we have a bowl of fresh whole fruit available in the Dining Hall, as well as an afternoon popsicle and bedtime snack. It would be helpful to prepare your child for this type of eating schedule as we get closer to camp.

Fear of Getting Sick:

We've all been trained this year with certain precautions in place to keep ourselves from getting sick. While we want, and need, campers to be aware of and follow health guidelines (social distancing, hand washing, mask wearing, etc.) at camp, we don't want them to be afraid to be around others. Reminding your child of our testing procedures, health screenings, and safety guidelines will help them feel comfortable in knowing that camp is a safe environment where we want them to interact with others without being afraid of getting sick. We also know that your children will follow your lead, so modeling appropriate health precautions like mask wearing and regular hand washing can go a long way.

We encourage you to talk with your children about advocating for themselves and talking to their counselors if they feel concerned about anything that comes up during their time at camp. Please

remind them that if they do not speak up, our staff will not know what they are facing and will not be able to help them. We have the team and resources in place to support each camper and give them an amazing and safe Alonim experience. We are looking forward to providing a safe and supportive experience for your children during a summer where they need camp more than ever.