



Tate's Day Camp

Home of the Fun Professionals

Parent/Camper Handbook 2026



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Camouflaged in FUN

Although Tate's Day Camp has become famous for our wide variety of activities, weekly themes, and excellent staff (a.k.a. The Fun Professionals), we have intentionally created a very specific camp environment and camouflaged a much greater mission into the program. We are leaders in child and youth development and partners with parents.

When you enroll at Tate's Day Camp, you are signing your child up for an educational experience. This is accomplished through challenge, support, teamwork, supervision, choice, and meaningful personal and social development. We teach children to communicate, problem solve, and practice social skills they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. We also allow children to experience both success and failure.

So the question becomes: how do we protect our children and still provide the experiences they will need to succeed later in life?

One of the many answers can be found in a single word: Camp.

Camp teaches children to cope with a variety of situations and to practice firsthand the strategies needed to deal with those situations. We provide opportunities to try new activities, meet new friends, and develop individual expression.

This is achieved by creating a camp environment that is positive, supportive, and intentionally designed for children.

At Tate's Day Camp, we are very intentional about our mission, and we value the opportunity to partner with your family.

Thank you for joining us.

Let the games begin,

Chris Strevel
Executive Director

On Your First Day

Every Monday marks the beginning of a new camp week, and we can't wait for your arrival. The first thing you need to do is arrive at the correct place. A detailed map and directions will be emailed to all parents prior to camp, and your child's age will determine which traffic pattern you should follow.

At each drop-off location, cars will be greeted by our morning team, and we will show campers where their belongings should be placed. **If you are new to camp or not attending consecutive weeks, please check in with a greeter to confirm your group assignment.**

Camp activities officially begin at 8:30 AM, and all campers should arrive by that time.

Traffic is generally heaviest between 8:15 and 8:30 AM. If you arrive during that time, please be patient as we work to help new campers get settled.

Sometimes the first day causes a little anxiety in children, and we want you to feel comfortable leaving your child. If parting seems difficult, please don't be alarmed or feel guilty. This is one of the educational benefits of camp and part of how children learn to manage transitions.

Any tears or apprehension are generally short-lived after parents leave, and we want you to rest assured that your child is happy and having fun.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Traffic Guidelines

When driving on the Tate's campus, please do not exceed 15 MPH and always be on the lookout for playing children and friendly squirrels. Parents should remain in their cars during drop-off and pick-up.

Morning Drop-Off

Camp families may drop off between 7:30 AM and 8:30 AM. Camp activities officially begin at 8:30 AM, and all campers should be at camp by that time.

Each morning begins with a special kickoff that includes important group announcements, songs, skits, the pledge of allegiance, and the daily cheer.

Afternoon Pick-Up

Camp activities end at 4:00 PM, and all campers should be picked up by 6:00 PM. Pick-up takes place in the same location as drop-off.

Security at Pick-Up

On your child's registration form there is a place to list the name(s) of anyone other than a parent/guardian who is authorized to pick up your child. Please be sure those names are current and accurate.

A car hang tag identifying your child will be issued on Mondays. We may check photo ID for anyone we do not recognize, and Tate's Day Camp will not release a child to anyone who is not on the authorized pick-up list or does not have the proper hang tag.

Parents may add names to the pick-up list at any time by calling the camp office. We will verify call-ins by asking you to confirm confidential information listed on your registration form.

It is not uncommon for families to carpool or for campers to go home with friends at the end of the day. We must have your permission if your child is going home with another camp parent unless that parent is listed on your permanent pick-up form.

At Tate's Day Camp, the safety and welfare of our campers is our number one priority. In the unlikely event we have reason to believe that a parent or other authorized person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is impaired in any other way, we will not release the camper into that person's custody. In that situation, we will call a spouse, relative, or someone else on the child's pick-up list to come and take the child home.

Personal Information

A Special Note to Parents Regarding Personal Information

Having prior knowledge about a learning difficulty, ADHD, anxiety, sensory sensitivities, social challenges, or a recent loss or major change in a child's life can make a tremendous difference in helping us respond with sensitivity, patience, understanding, and reassurance, particularly in the first few days of camp.

This is especially true for children who may be nervous about new situations or who need additional support with transitions, communication, or group settings. Some parents may worry that a camp will not accept their child if they are completely forthcoming about these situations. In our experience, the opposite is true.

Children often do best when we can partner with parents in planning for a safe and successful summer.

Tate's Day Camp is designed as a group-based program, and campers are expected to be able to participate with their group, remain with their group throughout the camp day, and be able to follow the direction of their counselors in a safe and cooperative manner. Sharing helpful information in advance allows us to determine how we can best support your child within this environment.

Please be open with us, and let's work together to create a positive camp experience for your child.

Medication From Home

If your child needs to take medication while at camp, please follow these steps:

- Completely fill out a Camp Medication form (available in the office or by email). Include when the medication is to be given and the dosage. We strongly recommend sending only enough medication for one week.
- List any side effects and who to call if we have questions.
- Sign the form authorizing us to administer the medication.

- Send medication in the original prescription bottle with the child's name and doctor's name. By law, we may not administer prescription medication unless it comes in the correct bottle with the child's name on it.
- **All medication, including over-the-counter products, must be checked in at the camp office.** Campers may not keep medication with them at camp except in approved circumstances arranged through the camp office, such as certain asthma inhalers or Epi-pens.

Some of our campers take medication for ADHD or other needs that affect concentration, regulation, or safety. Although summer may feel different from school, many aspects of camp require focus and sound judgment. When we are dealing with bows and arrows, fishhooks, bats, a zipline, climbing activities, and a low ropes course, it is important that campers are able to act safely at all times. Please allow us to work with you and your child's physician to help make sound decisions about medication when needed.

Illness at Camp

If your child is ill, has a fever, is vomiting, or may have a communicable illness, please keep your child home and notify the camp office. When in doubt, keep them out.

If a child becomes ill or is unable to continue the camp day, we will contact a parent or guardian.

If you have questions, please call the camp director.

Registration Changes and Payment Policies

Each weekly session in which your child is registered must be paid in full at least three weeks before the session begins. Families are set up at registration on automatic credit card payments that will be processed on the scheduled due dates.

If you wish to mail a payment, it must be received at least three weeks prior to the week your child is enrolled.

No child may attend camp until tuition is paid in full.

There are no refunds for canceling a week after the tuition due date of three weeks in advance. There are also no refunds for sick days or other absences.

If a check is returned due to insufficient funds, there is a \$39 returned check fee, and future payments must be made by cash, cashier's check, or credit card.

Prior to the tuition due date, there is a \$50 per week, per family drop fee for canceling a week after registration has been submitted. There is a \$25 fee to change a session after registration is submitted.

You may add weeks at any time at no charge, provided space is available.

If you need to drop or add a week, please call the camp office at 865-690-9208. Drop fees must be paid immediately.

Visitors

Parents have reasonable access to their child at any time during the camp day. For security, all visitors must check in at the camp office or welcome center upon arrival and follow campus check-in procedures.

We ask that visits be limited to brief observations or to attend a special show or project. Parents should not plan to remain with or participate in their child's group, especially following drop-off and morning opening.

Discipline at Camp

Camp is a wonderful environment to promote social skills and self-esteem in children, and we work intentionally to support both. The techniques we use include competitive and non-elimination games, group and camp cheers, age-specific groups and activities, low camper-staff ratios, positive reinforcement, and attention to the individual development of each child.

Our staff is trained in preventive disciplinary techniques that are often very effective, but at times additional intervention may be needed. Depending on the situation, counselors generally use one or more of the following approaches:

Techniques may include:

- Discussing the problem with the child and exploring possible solutions.
- Brief sit-out and observe (30 seconds to 5 minutes).
- Time-out — a more formal intervention that may include loss of privileges or missing a scheduled activity.

If a camper continues to break rules after these steps, the camper may be brought to a director along with a summary of the problem and the measures taken thus far. A director may discuss the issue with the camper and, when appropriate, contact a parent or guardian to discuss the situation.

Depending on the incident and the cooperation of the camper, we may ask a parent to pick up their child or schedule a conference.

If problems persist, or if behavior involves physical or emotional harm to another camper or staff member, a camper may be suspended or expelled from camp. There are no refunds if a camper is suspended or expelled for disciplinary reasons.

We want everyone to have a safe and happy summer, and at times these measures are necessary to help ensure a quality camp experience for all.

Our Program

The success of our campers is centered on age-specific groups, excellent staff, and a wide variety of activities. Hands-on experiences and low counselor-to-camper ratios provide opportunities for individual growth, confidence, and maturity.

Camp is a vital part of child and youth development, and campers attending consecutive weeks often experience greater skill development, stronger self-esteem, and deeper group bonds.

Although camp is all about FUN and exciting activities, it is also about community, teamwork, trying new things, experiencing both success and failure, making new friends, and feeling good about yourself.

Different weekly themes help keep camp exciting and fresh for campers who attend all summer. For a closer look at a typical week, two sample group schedules are included in the back of this handbook. Please keep in mind these are only samples, and your child's specific weekly schedule will vary.

Because of the wide variety of activities we offer, there is not enough time for a camper to participate in all activities during a single week of camp.

All campers are placed in age-specific groups so they can interact with others at similar physical and emotional stages of development. For reasons of safety, age or grade determines access to certain activities. For example, only campers in second grade and up participate in archery.

Due to the structure of our program, all campers must be completely potty trained. No diapers or pull-ups are allowed.

Our 54-acre campus includes multiple buildings, a boating pond, three saltwater swimming pools, recreational fields, woods, archery and axe throwing ranges, a climbing tower, zipline, group initiative course, campfire area, outdoor amphitheater, and natural areas for nature study and exploration.

Age-Specific Activities and Options

- Instructional Swimming (ages 3–8)
- Recreational Swimming (ages 3–13)
- Arts and Crafts (ages 3–13)
- Camp Singing (ages 3–13)
- Hillside Slip’n Slide (ages 3–13)
- Games and Sports (ages 3–13)
- Boating (ages 6–13)
- Small Climbing Wall (ages 5–8)
- Low Ropes / Group Initiatives (ages 7–13)
- Drama Activities (ages 7–13)
- Archery (ages 7–13)
- Nature Study (ages 5–13)
- Zipline (age-specific by group)
- Climbing/Rappelling Tower (ages 9–13)
- Organized Tree Climbing (ages 9–13)
- Archery Tag (ages 9–13)
- Axe Throwing (ages 11–13)

Swimming

Due to popular demand by both campers and parents, swimming has become one of our most popular camp activities. The popularity is so great that we feature three saltwater swimming pools.

All Discovery campers (ages 3 through those entering first grade), as well as campers entering second and third grades, receive daily swim lessons. Depending on a weekly theme or occasional event, a group may occasionally miss a lesson in order to participate in a specialized program.

Campers entering fourth through eighth grades do not receive structured lessons, but there are plenty of opportunities for pool games, recreational swimming, and other aquatic activities.

Our Tate's Day Camp aquatics staff are certified by the American Red Cross or another recognized certifying organization and adhere to high standards of pool supervision and safety.

Our primary goal during lessons is to further the swimming abilities of each camper. Campers attending multiple consecutive weeks of camp often show greater improvement than campers attending occasional weeks.

Restroom and Changing Room Policies

For the privacy, safety, and comfort of campers, the following guidelines apply to restroom and changing room use:

Only those members of the same sex shall be allowed in a multi-occupancy restroom or changing facility designated for the camper's sex.

Single occupancy restrooms shall be considered unisex. Any camper may request to use a single occupancy restroom or changing room if so desired.

Lunch

Lunch is included in weekly camp tuition, and we are pleased to provide healthy camp lunches prepared fresh onsite daily in our athletic and dining hall.

Guidelines and Procedures

- We prepare foods from fresh ingredients, limiting processed foods and avoiding products containing artificial colors, flavorings, MSG, preservatives, and high levels of sodium.
- We make environmentally responsible choices whenever practical, including the use of biodegradable paper products.
- Lunch is served around noon each day.

Menus will be posted online in early May. Substitutions and changes may occur based on ingredient availability.

Campers should not trade or share food with others to help protect those with food allergies, sensitivities, or dietary restrictions.

Snacks

A morning and afternoon snack is provided for Discovery campers (ages 3 through 1st grade).

For campers in 2nd grade and older, a camp store is available for morning and afternoon snack purchases. To avoid children carrying cash, Explorer and Adventure parents may deposit funds electronically into their child's camp wallet.

The camp store is not open during lunch.

Explorer and Adventure campers not using the camp store should bring a snack from home. Apples, bananas, trail mix, raisins, or granola bars are examples of items that may be brought.

We also recommend bringing a water bottle to camp. We take plenty of water breaks at cooler stations located throughout the property, and campers may refill and carry personal water bottles during the camp day.

What to Wear

Please label everything with your child's name.

Campers should wear shorts, T-shirts, socks, and tennis shoes or other appropriate outdoor footwear. For safety, all campers must wear closed-toe shoes that provide adequate support and stay securely on the foot while running.

Flip-flops, sandals, and open-toe shoes are not permitted for camp activities. Crocs are not recommended for most activities but may be worn to and from the pool.

Skirts and dresses are not appropriate for camp.

A sweatshirt or jacket is recommended for cool mornings, and ponchos or raincoats are recommended for wet days. On rainy days, Explorer and Adventure campers will still spend time outdoors, so being prepared is important. Discovery campers may spend more time indoors but should still come prepared for changing weather.

Swimsuits and a towel should be brought every day, along with sunscreen. We recommend applying sunscreen before arriving at camp. Campers may bring sunscreen from home to reapply during the day as needed.

Adventure Camp females (ages 11–13) should wear one-piece swimsuits.

In compliance with Health Department recommendations, all swimsuits and towels must be taken home each day and not left at camp.

T-Shirt Tuesdays

Tuesday is the day we show our camp spirit by wearing our camp T-shirts.

Although not required, campers and staff are encouraged to wear their camp T-shirt each Tuesday.

Items From Home

Campers may bring water bottles, books, bandanas, sunscreen, and clothing items. Please label all items from home with your child's name.

Younger campers may bring a blanket and a stuffed friend for rest time. We provide rest mats for our three and four year old campers and recommend that fives and sixes bring a small blanket or extra towel for rest and reading.

We cannot guarantee the safekeeping of extra items and are not responsible for loss of or damage to those items.

Campers should not bring pocketknives, weapons, trading cards, toys, chewing gum, candy, electronics, or cell phones to camp.

Communication

One of the great benefits of a day camp is the opportunity to communicate regularly with parents. In addition to seeing many of you each day, we communicate through email and other camp communications throughout the summer.

We will strive to share both the good and the not-so-good about each week, and your feedback is always welcome. We may also issue an electronic questionnaire or two during the summer and encourage your comments as we continually work to improve.

Because our counselors are assigned to work shifts and provide supervision to their campers, they are generally not available to come to the car during drop-off or pick-up. If you need to speak with your child's counselor, please speak with one of our program directors in advance and we will help arrange that.

In situations involving illness, injury, or other concerns during the camp day, we will contact a parent or guardian when appropriate.

Inclement Weather Communication

Camp operates rain or shine, and weather-related adjustments are sometimes part of camp life. In the event of severe weather, schedule changes, or other significant weather-related updates, we will communicate with parents through our normal camp communication channels.

Your Child's Group

A great deal of thought goes into placing your child in the right group. We consider factors such as age or grade, boy-girl ratio, the number of weeks a camper is attending, and other group dynamic variables.

Campers are placed in age-specific groups based on grade level. Our program is structured so that as campers grow and continue coming to Tate's Day Camp over the years, they experience new opportunities and challenges. Because of this progression and the developmental stages of children, we do not move campers to groups outside their age or grade range.

Children not attending consecutive weeks may be placed in different groups.

Friend Request Policy

Camp is a wonderful place to develop new friendships, and our staff works intentionally to help campers feel welcomed and included.

Due to the structure of our program, small group sizes, and the flexibility of weekly enrollment, there are limitations in trying to honor friend requests. Please help us by following our friend request policy.

Friends requesting to be together must be in the same grade or group level, and the request must be reciprocal, meaning both parties must request each other.

Only one friend request is allowed. Multiple requests will not be honored.

Requests should be made by April 1.

Although we work to honor reciprocal requests received by April 1, **friend requests are never guaranteed.**

As we work to honor requests, we must also consider factors such as maintaining a fair boy-girl ratio and trying to keep campers attending consecutive weeks with the same counselor when possible.

Please understand it is up to parents to coordinate with other parents to be sure requests are reciprocal if they would like us to try to place the children together.

Lost and Found

Please label all items (clothing, towels, lunch boxes, water bottles, camp T-shirts, etc.) with your child's name.

We make every effort to help campers keep belongings in their backpack or on their person. Please make a quick check of your child's backpack before leaving each day. Lost items are much easier to recover on the same day they are misplaced.

Lost items are held in the camp office for one week and then donated to a local charity.

No Television or Video Games

Tate's Day Camp is proud to take a stand by not allowing television or video games as part of our regular camp program.

To our dismay, some childcare centers and camp programs use television in place of active staff engagement. We believe children and adults in a camp setting have far better opportunities to interact through games, sports, educational experiences, and plain old fun.

Television may occasionally be used at camp in conjunction with a video-making club, specialty camp, or to support a guest speaker or educational topic, but never to show rented movies or provide entertainment in place of a staff member.

We are not referring to home viewing at all.

The Staff

Although Tate's Day Camp has become known for many things, one of our greatest strengths is our staff. The success of our program depends largely on the quality of the men and women who work with our campers each summer.

We look for the following qualities in our staff:

- Strong moral character and sound judgment.
- Genuine interest in children and the ability to work well with them.
- Energy, enthusiasm, and a positive attitude.
- Skill in activities they teach or supervise.
- Maturity, dependability, and emotional stability.
- Strong references and successful completion of background checks.
- Completion of orientation, training, and certification requirements appropriate to their role.

Our staff is supported and supervised by year-round and seasonal directors who work closely with counselors throughout the summer.

The Fun Professionals

Our staff is affectionately known as The Fun Professionals, a name that reflects both the spirit and responsibility they bring to camp each day.

Creating fun for children is serious business. Great camp staff do far more than lead games and activities. They encourage, teach, redirect, support, supervise, and help create the kind of positive environment where children can grow in confidence and feel successful.

We believe fun and professionalism go hand in hand, and we take pride in building a culture where both matter.

Camperships and Financial Assistance

Tate's Day Camp has two main campership funds: The Robert Dowbiggin Campership and The Holly Ann Clancy Memorial Campership.

Robert Dowbiggin served as Director of Tate's Day Camp from 1988 through 1992. His passion for excellence and high standards left a lasting impact on our camp, and we honor his legacy through this campership fund.

Holly Ann Clancy was a veteran camper and CIT at Tate's Day Camp. Following Holly's death in an automobile accident in 2005, staff members established a campership fund in her memory.

Contributions may be made to the Tate's Foundation and are tax deductible as charitable contributions. For more information about camperships or financial assistance, please call the camp office.

Backpack Checklist

Did you remember to send:

- Closed-toe shoes for camp activities
- Swimsuit and towel
- Sunscreen
- Two snacks or wallet money (2nd through 8th graders)
- A jacket or sweatshirt for cool mornings
- A poncho and extra socks on wet days
- Old shoes for muddy days are recommended

And remember to label all items with your child's name.