



**CAMPING CHALLENGE** | *Take your home outdoors*

**FOR THIS ADVENTURE, LEAVE THE INDOORS BEHIND**

This challenge is designed to introduce your child to the excitement of camping, with a focus on comfort, creativity, and simple discovery. Our goal is to make camping activities a source of joy and imagination, fostering positive associations with the outdoors while building fundamental skills.

**SIMPLE CAMPSITE FUN & IMAGINATION (BUILDING COMFORT)**

These activities introduce the foundational elements of camping through fun and play, perfect for the backyard or living room.

**What To Do**

**Learning Goal**

**Indoor Camping Adventure:** Build a cozy fort using blankets, pillows, and furniture inside. Spend the evening reading nature books by flashlight, singing silly songs, or telling stories.

Fosters imagination and connects the comfort of home with the concept of a "campsite."

**Backyard Basecamp Play:** Set up a small tent, a homemade tent (blanket/sheet over chairs), or use your camper/RV. Your child can use it as a "clubhouse" during the day for picnics, naps, or playing with stuffed animals.

Introduces the shelter as a safe, fun space without the commitment of an overnight stay.

**"Campfire" Story Time:** Create a pretend fire using red, yellow, and orange tissue paper inside a circle of rocks or sticks. Dim the lights and share stories or sing camping songs around your safe "fire."

Develops creativity and teaches fire safety concepts (e.g., "stay close," "don't touch") in a controlled setting.

**The Great Sleepout Prep:** Practice getting into a sleeping bag on the floor (in your tent or camper). Teach them to zip and unzip their bag by themselves.

Builds self-help skills and prepares them for the physical routine of camping later on.

**OUTDOOR COOKING & ESSENTIALS**

These activities focus on the exciting, sensory experience of making and eating food outdoors and practicing good stewardship.

**What To Do**

**Learning Goal**

**Campfire Treat (Adult-Led):** Make a simple treat using an outdoor grill, fire pit, or portable stove. You can cook foil packets with bananas and chocolate chips, or classic s'mores.

Focuses on following instructions and safety rules. It's also a sensory experience of smell and taste in nature.





## OUTDOOR COOKING & ESSENTIALS

### What To Do

**Camp Snack Packing:** Give your child a small backpack. Help them fill a water bottle and choose two snacks for an outdoor adventure.

Teaches responsibility and the concept of packing essentials for a short trip.

**Skewer Fun!** Show your child how to thread fruit pieces (like grapes or bananas) onto a kid-safe wooden skewer for an outdoor snack. No cooking needed!

Develops fine motor skills and makes eating healthy items feel like a special camping activity.

**"Leave No Trace" Critter Game:** Before going inside or to bed, have your children help you clean up all crumbs, wrappers, and safely store food items away from the campsite.

Teaches stewardship and the importance of keeping food away from wildlife to protect both animals and the camp.

## TIPS FOR A HAPPY LITTLE CAMPER (COMFORT & EASE)

These practical suggestions will help you make camping stress-free and enjoyable for your preschooler.

### Tips for Parents

**Bring Comfort Items:** Pack a favorite stuffed animal, blanket, or pillow from home.

**Maintain the Routine:** Stick as closely as possible to their regular meal and bedtime schedule.

**Give a "Job":** Assign simple, important tasks like holding the flashlight on a night walk or zipping the tent door.

**Take a Practice Nap:** If you're planning an overnight trip, take a 20-minute nap in the tent or camper during the day before trying to sleep there at night.

**Pack the Right Gear:** Dress them in warm, layered pajamas and a cozy hat for sleeping, even if it feels warm at bedtime.

### Why it Works for Preschoolers

Having familiar items makes a new environment (like a tent) feel safe and secure for sleep.

Predictability reduces anxiety and meltdowns in a new setting.

This builds their confidence and sense of importance.

This familiarizes them with the sounds and shadows.

Young children can become cold quickly overnight.





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Camping is a wonderful way to unplug and unwind. Here are a variety of suggestions designed to meet every level, from an indoor blanket fort to overnight backpacking.

**Indoor Camping** - Build a fort indoors with blankets and pillows. Spend the evening unplugged; play games, read a book, or tell stories.

**Set up a Tent** - Practice picking an appropriate site and setting up your tent. Make sure you are prepped for all kinds of weather.

**Camp in your Backyard** - Backyard camping is fun and a great way to build skills and confidence.

**Community Camping** - Attend a local camping event or participate in an organized camping experience through schools or community centers. Several organizations rent camping gear. They can help you find the right fit for your family.

**Camp at a Campground** - There are a variety of campgrounds with diverse amenities. Find one that works for your family and give everyone the gift of an overnighter outside.

**Go on a Day Hike with a Backpack** - Pack a small backpack with essentials (water, snacks, first aid, sunscreen) and go on a day hike. Practice navigating the trail, managing your gear, and taking breaks as needed. Camp overnight at a nearby location or in a designated backcountry area if possible.

**How to Use a Compass** - Use a map and compass to practice basic orienteering skills and navigate through local parks or trails.

**Learn to Tie Basic Knots** - Learn how to tie useful knots like the square knot, bowline, or clove hitch that are essential for camping tasks.

**Pack a Backpack** - Pack a backpack with all the essential camping gear: a sleeping bag, food, water, a first-aid kit, and a flashlight.

**Learn About Basic First Aid** - Learn basic first aid skills, such as how to treat a scrape or cut or what to do in case of a minor injury. Pack a first aid kit. Bringing gauze, ace bandages, and large band-aids are helpful on any overnight camping trip.

**Build a Shelter** - Learn how to create a basic lean-to or shelter using natural materials like branches and leaves.

**Identify Safe Wild Plants** - Learn to identify safe, edible, or useful wild plants in your area (like dandelions, which can be used for medicinal or nutritional purposes).

**Practice Water Filtration** - Learn how to purify water by using a filter or boiling it for survival situations.

**TAKE IT UP A NOTCH!**

**Backpacking** - Feel confident in your camping skills? Try backpacking! Whether it's one night or a huge adventure, you will stretch your camping skills.

**Leave No Trace** - Take the beginner Leave No Trace training to sharpen your stewardship skills.

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## **OUTDOOR COOKING**

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*There are many exciting ways to cook outdoors—perfect for developing new skills and enjoying meals in nature! Lots of city and county parks feature public grills. You can try many of these activities at a local park!*

**Make a Campfire Meal** - Learn to cook a simple meal over a campfire, outdoor grill, or portable stove. You can try foil packets with veggies or meat, s'mores, or hot dogs for a classic campfire experience.

**Cook Using a Camp Stove** - If you can access a camp stove, an experienced adult can guide you in making meals like pasta or scrambled eggs outdoors.

**Campfire Cooking Skills** - Learn to cook on a grate or a rock placed near the fire. This technique is great for making meals like grilled cheese or burgers.

**DIY Solar Oven** - Use a cardboard box, aluminum foil, and plastic wrap to create a simple solar oven. This ecofriendly method can be used to cook meals like s'mores, baked apples, or roasted vegetables. Find online tutorials to help guide you!

**Tin Foil Packet Cooking** - Wrap meals like chicken and veggies such as potatoes in foil packets. Place them in the campfire coals or grill for a delicious meal.

**Skewer it!** - Did you know marshmallows aren't the only thing you can cook over a campfire? Try skewering hot dogs for a classic campfire treat, or get creative with fruits like fresh pineapple and peaches and veggies like bell peppers and zucchini. Grill them over the fire for a delicious and healthy outdoor snack.

**Cooking with a Dutch Oven** - If you have a Dutch oven, you can cook stews and soups and even bake bread or desserts like cobblers over the fire.

**One-Pot Meals** - Use a single pot or pan to make easy, hearty meals like chili, pasta, or stir-fried rice. These dishes are great for campers with limited equipment and are perfect for sharing.

**Cooking with a Cast Iron Skillet** - A cast iron skillet is ideal for outdoor cooking. Try making scrambled eggs, pancakes, or grilled sandwiches on a campfire or portable stove.

