

Outdoor Education at Camp Ocean Pines

Chaperone Guide 2023-2024

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Thank you for volunteering your time, thank you for helping to keep our program affordable and accessible to as many students as possible, and thank you for choosing to be a part of this wonderful experience!

Chaperones are a key component of the nature camp experience. An engaged, energetic cabin chaperone can support their student group throughout their camp experience, helping them to navigate homesickness, loneliness, and the nervousness that comes from trying new things in a new environment. A sleep-deprived, grumpy chaperone can negatively affect a child's entire camp experience. With that in mind, we will not require you to stay with your group 24/7. You will be asked to stay with your group during meals, free time blocks, and overnight as well as any time that we go off-site (tide pools, kayaking, etc.). You will have breaks during some of the lesson blocks to take a nap, have a shower, or just relax with a cup of coffee. It is the school's responsibility to schedule or coordinate these breaks. We want our students to have an awesome time at camp, and we want our chaperones to enjoy the experience too!

This packet includes some information about the nature camp experience along with a list of chaperone responsibilities. Please review the packet as well as the responsibilities - when you arrive at camp we will have a brief chaperone meeting. If you have any questions about anything, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us in advance. We look forward to meeting you at camp!

Chaperone Responsibilities

Please review this page before arriving at camp. Upon your group's arrival, there will be a brief chaperone meeting.

1. **Assist with group management during lessons/activities**
 - a. Please allow the experience to be about the students by letting them answer the questions and refraining from distracting behavior such as answering phone calls and taking intrusive photos
 - b. Help to keep the students focused and engaged
 - c. Check in with your naturalist to see how you can help and when you can take a break
2. **Supervise cabin time**
 - a. Make sure that your students are being respectful, appropriate, and tidy in the cabin
 - b. Ensure that your group is on time and prepared for meals and activities
 - c. Help enforce the 5-minute shower rule
 - d. Accompany your students to the camp store and help them shop
3. **Supervise meals**
 - a. We ask that at least one chaperone sits at each table in the dining hall
 - b. Please help us enforce dining hall rules and keep the noise level manageable
 - c. If you or a student has a dietary restriction, the kitchen will have something prepared
 - d. If a staff member needs to make an announcement, please get your table quiet
4. **Supervise free time**
 - a. We have four free time areas: the Field, the Turf, the Fireside Room, and the Oceanview Field
 - b. Please supervise your cabin group in between meals and activities
 - c. Free time is a great opportunity to practice skits for campfire
5. **Refrain from alcohol, drugs, and tobacco**
 - a. Any adults found with any of these substances will be asked to leave camp
6. **Never be alone with a student**
 - a. This is to protect the students and to protect you from liability
 - b. If you need to take an individual student somewhere, be sure to have them bring a buddy

Cabin Groups

You will be assigned to a cabin group of 4-9 students. (Our cabins each have 10 bunk-style beds.) This will be the group that you supervise overnight and during free time blocks. You may also sit with them during meals, depending on whether your school group has open seating or not.

Activity Groups

The students will be in teaching groups of 10-15 students. You will be assigned to a teaching group and will stay with that group. Each teaching group will be led by a Naturalist, who will lead the activities, handle group management, and keep the group on task. Chaperones support the naturalists by encouraging the students to listen and stay involved in what is happening.



A Typical Day At Camp

Our chaperones help to keep things on track by reminding the students of this schedule and helping them get to meals and activities on time.

8:00	Breakfast
9:00	First 3-hour daytime activity block (or two 1.5 hour activity blocks)
12:00	Cabin time - for students to change, grab anything that they forgot at the cabin, etc.
12:30	Lunch
1:30	Rec field time
2:00	Afternoon activity block (1.5 hour)
3:30	Student choice activity block (1 hour)
4:30	Cabin time for students to shower, take a nap, etc.
5:30	Dinner
6:30	Rec field time
7:00	1.5-hour evening activity block
8:30	Evening announcements
9:30	Lights out

On off-site days, we will pack a lunch after breakfast and leave camp around 9:15am. We usually return to camp between 3-3:30pm for cabin time.

Staying Connected at Camp

Chaperones are often concerned about how they will stay connected with a spouse, kids back home, etc. Cell coverage at camp is poor, but we do have wi-fi throughout Camp. We also have a phone in the office that is accessible to adults.

Please note: we ask students not to bring phones, laptops, etc. but chaperones certainly may!

Homesickness

For many kids, this will be their first time spending the night away from home. For others, they may have spent the night at a friend's house before where they were able to call/text mom and dad. Camp is different. It gets very dark at night. Students do not have access to their cell phones or tablets. It is not unusual for homesickness to hit, especially during the first night.

As a cabin chaperone, you will usually be the first person to know when a student in your cabin is feeling homesick. Your compassionate response could be what they need in order to have a great time at camp.

- Don't shame or publicly embarrass a homesick student
- Don't ignore a homesick student and hope that they will "get over it"
- Don't tell a student they can call home. (Although this may happen later in the process)
- Don't tell a student they can go home early - that's a decision for the teacher!

Instead:

- Let the student know that everyone, even you, misses home sometimes - and that's ok!
- Reinforce the idea of "making it through" camp as an important personal goal. "Think of how proud your mom and dad will be! Think of how proud you will be at the end!"
- Talk to the student about the fun things that they did that day.
- Talk to the student about the fun things planned for the next day and the day after.
- Make the student feel important and needed by assigning him or her a special duty.
- Tell a story or read a children's book to help the students fall asleep. (No scary stories please! There is almost always at least one kid who gets scared and is too embarrassed to say so.)
- Use the student's teacher as a resource - teachers know their students and are probably already aware of the issue.
- Use the camp staff as a resource - we have years of experience talking with homesick kids.



Understanding and Preventing Child Abuse

It is important to the Camp Ocean Pines staff, school staff, and most importantly, the parents of our students that each child feels safe and secure at camp. For this reason, we ask all of our chaperones to read through the following behaviors that might be considered abuse.

- Intentional or unintentional "meanness" toward students such as critical, sarcastic or cutting remarks. Comebacks or put-downs are all signs and examples of verbal and emotional or psychological abuse.
- Any act, intentional or unintentional, that could cause a student to feel embarrassed, fearful or insecure.
- Any excessive or physical form of punishment such as push-ups, running laps, hitting, pushing, shoving, pinching, grabbing, squeezing, pulling or any other use of the hands, feet or objects that could cause bodily harm.
- Allowing behavior that could result in bodily harm.
- Any display, physical or verbal, that is sexual in nature.
- Offering, allowing or encouraging in any way the use of inappropriate pictures, magazines, books or paraphernalia.
- Participating in, encouraging or allowing inappropriate discussions, particularly of a sexual or sexist nature.

In addition to refraining from these actions yourself, look out for any abusive situations that may be occurring around you. If you suspect that a child is being abused, either at camp or at home, please bring your concerns to the camp staff and/or the student's teacher. If any staff member is made aware of a potentially abusive situation, we will take steps to ensure the safety of the child. Thank you for your help in preventing and dealing with this sensitive issue.

What to Bring

Weather in Cambria can be very unpredictable. Some days are chilly and foggy, some are warm and sunny, and often we get both of those in one day!

- clothing for warm weather (shorts and t-shirts)
- clothing for cold weather (pants and at least one warm sweatshirt/jacket)
- one pair of comfortable close-toed shoes
- one extra pair of shoes that can get wet (they need to have a backstrap to be worn at the tide pools; flip-flops and slides may only be used in cabin)
- backpack/daypack to carry during the day
- reusable water bottle
- flashlight
- warm sleeping bag or twin bedding and blankets
- pillow with pillow case
- Sunscreen
- towel
- toiletries

Please note: we ask students not to bring phones, laptops, etc.

Optional items: camera, binoculars, sunglasses, flip flops (for shower only), book for reading, money for camp store (\$20-\$30 is amount that we recommend for students, we do take credit/debit cards), hat for extra sun protection, cards, quiet games for cabin time

Don't bring: weapons, alcohol, tobacco, drugs

