



PIEDMONT EAST BAY CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Tips for first-year campers and parents:

Parents:

Send lots of Letters! Mail call is a very exciting time for the campers and first year campers who receive a lot of mail feel connected enough to home without getting too homesick. We recommend sending a few letters a couple days before camp starts so that they will have mail at the very first mail call. (We will also take hand-delivered letters at the choir office, and bring them up to camp with us!) In your letters try to write about positive everyday things you are doing and try not to write too much about how much you miss them - this can bring on a bout of homesickness for some children. Letters that include messages that build a child's confidence about their own independence can make a huge difference to a child struggling with homesickness.

- Encourage family and friends to also send letters to your child at camp. Getting a letter from an unexpected source is a really positive experience.
- Send your child to camp with stationery and stamps so they can write letters to you too. This is a fun way for them to spend time alone to recharge and also to feel connected to you. Also, feel free to send your child to camp with the address for some of their friends who won't be at camp so they can write them letters as well.
- Don't worry too much about "sad" letters from your child. We find year after year that even the happiest campers will send letters home highlighting something difficult that happened or about how they are feeling homesick. This is part of their process of coping with these feelings, but often doesn't reflect the overall time they are having at camp.
- Small care packages are okay, but please do not send any food, candy or other banned items. Food and candy stashed away in cabins get found by ants, pests, and attracts larger wildlife like raccoons and foxes.
- If you would like to send mail to your camper, please send it to the following address:

(Camper's Name)
Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir Camp
Walker Creek Ranch
1700 Marshall Petaluma Road.
Petaluma, CA 94952

Leave all Technology at Home! We ask that no cell phones or tablets be sent to camp because we have found that they cause more homesickness and encourage kids to withdraw from their peers. There is also limited cell service at Walker Creek, and the wifi is

only for staff use. If we see campers with technology, we will confiscate it and return it at the end of camp.

- We ask that parents not encourage their children to try to sneak their technological devices to camp in order to keep in touch with them. This sends a message to your child that they can't handle camp on their own, and we have found that campers that don't feel empowered to be independent at camp struggle the most with homesickness.
- Camp is one of the last places where children can still be "screen-free," and we feel that this is a sacred space to preserve, because of the opportunities it provides for children to explore themselves without the social pressures that come from social media, text messages, and email. We appreciate you and your child's respect for this space we are creating.

Check out the Camp Blog! We will write a camp blog everyday about highlights of the day. At the end of each blog there will be a link to all the pictures we have taken that day. We try to get a photo of each kid every day, but some kids are reluctant to be in photos, so if you don't see your child one day, check the photos the next day. We will send a link to the blog closer to camp, but you can check out current and past blogs here:

<https://piedmontchoirs.org/camp-blog>

Swimming! There is a lake at Walker Creek that campers can swim in every afternoon. If your singer is not an experienced swimmer or is nervous about it we encourage you to sign them up for swim lessons and basic water safety training before camp so that they feel comfortable joining in on the fun! Please note that swimming is not mandatory at our camp. All campers take a swim test on the first day if they wish to swim or boat in the lake during their time at Walker Creek. Personal floatation devices available on-site are required for kids who do not take or pass the swim test so they can still join in on aquatic fun!

Campers:

- Be sure to remember any items from home that are a comfort to you (ie stuffed animals, pictures, books, etc)
- Know that your counselor is at camp for **you**, and you can reach out to them if you need help, feel sad, or just need a friend - they are so excited to get to meet you and spend this special time with you! They are never too busy and will always make time for you.
- Make sure you pack everything on the [packing list](#), including extra underwear and socks.
- Put labels in your clothes so if you lose something at camp, it can make its way back to you as soon as possible.
- Pack enough warm clothing for cool nights so that you will be comfortable when you sleep.

- Pack a few wacky clothing items for spirit days (ie brightly colored clothes, a tutu, facepaint, costumes, etc)
- Look forward to the special experience you are about to have - camp is a unique and wonderful place where you will learn a lot, meet a lot of new friends, and be surrounded by nature. Be open to the unexpected - be it a friendship with someone you haven't spent a lot of time with before or a rabbit on the path to breakfast!