WELCOME TO K-TRIBE CAMP

First-Camp Welcome Guide + Returning Dad Refresher

Three weekends. A lot of walking. A few campfires. A lifetime of memories.

K-Tribe is a dad-and-kids organization built around spending intentional time together. Camp is one of the best parts of the experience: a weekend at a YMCA camp facility where families unplug, try new things, build friendships, and make memories together.

This guide is written for first-time families who want to know what to expect - and for returning dads who know that somehow we still forget the sleeping bag, rain gear, snacks, or flashlight.

THE BIG IDEA

You do not need to be an outdoorsman, an expert fisherman, or an experienced camper. Show up prepared, be present, and follow your child's lead. There is no single "right" way to do camp.

Camp Ages

Regular camp programming is for grades K-3.

Trailblazers

Grades 4-5. They are older campers and help with traditions such as the Saturday Rock Hunt.

YMCA Facilities

K-Tribe camps are hosted at YMCA camp facilities. Camp Willson and Camp Kern are current locations.

Your Weekend at a Glance

FRIDAY

Arrive around 5 PM. Check in, complete camp waivers, unload at your cabin, set up bunks, explore, meet families, and gather for hot dogs and s'mores around the campfire. No formal dinner is served. Lights out is around 10 PM.

SATURDAY

Breakfast, then choose your own adventure: fishing, canoeing, hiking, climbing, crafts, sports, competitions, the Rock Hunt, or simply hanging out. Lunch and dinner are provided. Evening includes the special tribe ceremony and ice cream social.

SUNDAY

Breakfast, Crazy Hair Day fun, pack up, clean the cabin, and head home. Most families are on the road around 10 AM and home around noon.

The #1 Question: Where Do We Sleep?

You will stay in a group cabin with twin-size bunk beds. Cabins generally have two sleeping sides with roughly 14-16 spaces on each side, plus dorm-style restrooms. Cabins are heated and air-conditioned.

Your tribe is assigned a cabin, although two tribes may sometimes be combined when enrollment is lower. Bunks are generally claimed on a first-come, first-served basis. A very common setup is the child on the top bunk with Dad directly below.

There are separate girl and boy cabins. The cabins are located near one another, so kids naturally move between groups during the day and then return to their assigned cabin to sleep.

REMEMBER: THIS IS CAMP, NOT A HOTEL

The bunk is your sleeping space. You provide everything needed to sleep comfortably: pillow, sleeping bag or twin sheets and blankets, and any other bedding you prefer. Many kids simply sleep in a sleeping bag on the bunk.

Sleep Better: Veteran Reminders

- Bring ALL bedding and pillows for both Dad and child.
- The beds are twin-size.
- If you are a light sleeper, bring earplugs or a white-noise machine.
- Bring a flashlight or headlamp for Dad and a separate one for your child.
- Label everything. Kids move between cabins, and items get left behind.
- Think carefully before bringing valuables. Camp lost-and-found can get impressive.

At some locations, a few families independently choose to camp in tents. Those families still receive assigned cabin space in case plans or weather change. If you choose to camp in a tent, you are responsible for providing all items and cleanup.

Bathrooms & Getting Ready

Cabins have dorm-style restrooms, and additional restrooms are available in common areas such as the dining hall. Plan to freshen up rather than shower—camp is typically a wash-up, change-clothes, and keep-moving kind of weekend. Pack fresh clothes, toiletries, washcloths or wipes, and what you need to feel comfortable.

Dad + Kid = The Point

K-Tribe camp is not a drop-off program. Dad remains responsible for his child throughout the weekend. You are the one taking your child fishing, getting in the canoe, walking to activities, exploring trails, and sitting around the campfire together.

Younger children often stay close to Dad. As kids get older and build friendships, they naturally become more independent around camp. With roughly 100 attendees, there are dads and kids everywhere, and people tend to help one another.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO KNOW HOW

Never fished? Another dad will probably help. Never been canoeing? Try it together. Camp is about giving your child experiences - not proving that you already know how to do everything.

Saturday Is Choose Your Own Adventure

Saturday does not operate like a tightly scheduled conference. Families choose what sounds fun, follow the kids' interests, and move at their own pace. Some kids want to try everything; others could fish for hours. Some will spend time in the cabin drawing, coloring, making bracelets, inventing games, or simply laughing with friends.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Fishing, canoeing, hiking, climbing wall, giant rope swing, archery, and exploring the camp.

SPORTS & CHALLENGES

Basketball, kickball, fishing competition, canoe racing, and other friendly sporting challenges.

CRAFTS & DOWNTIME

Bracelet making, crafts, coloring, games, and hanging out around the cabins.

ROCK HUNT

Trailblazers hide red, white, and blue rocks around camp. Kids search throughout the day and trade their rocks for prizes Saturday afternoon.

CAMPFIRE TIME

When you are tired, sit down. Bring a folding chair and enjoy the fire. You do not need to be doing something every minute.

TRY SOMETHING NEW

Encourage your child to stretch a little - but do not turn the weekend into a checklist. The goal is experiences, not completion.

K-Tribe Traditions

Camp has its own traditions beyond the YMCA activities. These are part of what kids begin to look forward to from one camp to the next.

- Each camp session has its own commemorative patch, typically designed by kids from a prior year.
- Saturday includes the Rock Hunt, with Trailblazers hiding colored rocks for younger campers to find and exchange for prizes.
- Saturday evening includes a special tribe ceremony focused on friendship, connection, and memory-making. The details are intentionally saved for the experience itself.
- An ice cream social follows the Saturday evening ceremony.
- Sunday breakfast includes the Crazy Hair Day award - so bedhead can be an advantage.

Disconnect for the Weekend

There is no Wi-Fi, and that is a feature, not a problem. Kids are encouraged to leave iPads, tablets, and other entertainment electronics at home. The weekend is about being outdoors, disconnecting from everyday routines, and spending time together.

Many kids love having their own headlamp or flashlight. It becomes something they are responsible for, and it is genuinely useful when everyone is moving around camp after dark.

Food: Learn From the Veteran Dads

Camp meals are traditional camp-style meals. Saturday includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner; Sunday includes breakfast. Friday does not have a formal dinner, although the campfire typically includes hot dogs and s'mores.

THE BIGGEST FIRST-CAMP LESSON

Pack food your child will actually eat. Bring a cooler with your favorite snacks, drinks, and simple foods that do not require cooking. Camp food is camp food, and there is nothing worse than a tired, hungry child who will not eat what is being served.

Think: Tailgating for a Whole Weekend

You are not wilderness camping, but you are not checking into a hotel either. Think about the things you would want nearby if you were spending an entire weekend outdoors: comfortable clothes, food and drinks, a chair, weather gear, light, and a few familiar comforts.

- Cooler with water, sports drinks, favorite snacks, sandwiches, fruit, or other easy foods.
- Folding camp chair for the campfire and downtime.
- Fishing pole if you already have one. Do not feel like you need to buy one just for camp; dads often have extras.
- Games, cards, coloring supplies, or other low-tech activities your child enjoys.
- Do not forget their stuffy.
- Coffee plan if you are particular about coffee. The dining hall has dispenser-style coffee; veteran dads sometimes bring their own camp-coffee setup.

You Will Walk. A Lot.

YMCA camp properties are large, and activities are spread across the grounds. Expect to walk and walk and walk. Comfortable athletic shoes matter. Bring clothes you are comfortable seeing get muddy, wet, dirty, or smoky from the campfire.

WHEN YOU ARE TIRED

Stop. Sit by the campfire. Hang out at the cabin. Color with the kids. You do not have to do everything, and you do not have to keep moving all day.

Camp Happens Regardless of the Weather

K-Tribe has camped through beautiful weekends, rain-filled weekends, cold weather, and even snow. Camp continues, and the weather becomes part of the adventure.

Check the forecast right before leaving and pack for the weather you are actually going to have - not the weather you hope to have. Bring layers, rain gear, extra clothes, extra socks, and appropriate shoes. Some of the weekends that do not go according to plan become the stories kids remember most.

What If We Cannot Stay the Entire Weekend?

We recommend staying the whole weekend, but we understand schedules, and that is okay. Some families stay Friday through Sunday. Others arrive Saturday morning. Some come on Friday and leave Saturday evening. Families should do what works for their child.

If a younger child is exhausted, homesick, overwhelmed, or simply not ready for two nights away, leaving early is not "failing" camp. Registration is one set price regardless of how much of the weekend you attend.

THERE IS NO ONE RIGHT WAY TO DO CAMP

Stay the whole weekend. Come for part of it. Try every activity. Fish for three hours. Sit by the fire. Follow your kid's lead and make the weekend work for your family.

What If My Child Does Not Know Anyone?

That is exactly why K-Tribe hosts activities throughout the year. Tribe meetings, movie nights, and other small gatherings help dads and kids recognize one another's faces and build relationships before camp.

Kids are from the same school district, and families are encouraged to invite other dads and kids they know who may enjoy K-Tribe. At camp, the cabins are close together, kids mix naturally, and friendships often form through activities and simple downtime.

K-Tribe Is a Community

There is a lot going on, especially during your first year. You are learning dads' names, kids' names, tribes, grades, activities, and everything else that comes with joining a new group.

ASK AGAIN. REALLY.

Do not be embarrassed to ask someone their name for the 10th time. Introduce yourself again. Ask their name again. No one expects you to remember everyone immediately.

Remember, K-Tribe is a community - not just a series of camp weekends. The dads and kids you meet at camp are the same people you will start seeing at school drop-off, the coffee shop, sporting events, community activities, and around town.

Over time, familiar faces become friendships. The kids will start recognizing you, you will start recognizing them, and before long, you will become one of the familiar adults in their community, too.

So say hello. Introduce yourself. Sit next to someone new at the campfire. Join another family for an activity. Help another dad - or ask another dad for help. Relationships are part of the experience.

Another Dad Tip: Walkie-Talkies

Some families like to bring walkie-talkies to camp. First, they are fun - kids love them. They can also provide a little age-appropriate independence while giving Dad an easy way to stay connected.

As kids become more comfortable at camp and start moving between nearby cabins, activities, and groups of friends, walkie-talkies can be a useful way to check in. They do not replace Dad's supervision or responsibility, but they can add a little independence with oversight.

FUN + A LITTLE INDEPENDENCE

Walkie-talkies are not required, but if you already have a set at home, camp is a great place to use them. Label them before you come - they are exactly the kind of thing kids set down and forget.

Quick Pack Reminder

SLEEP
- Sleeping bag OR twin sheets/blankets
- Pillows
- Earplugs/white noise if needed

WEAR
- Comfortable athletic clothes
- Layers / sweatshirt / jacket
- Extra clothes, socks, underwear
- Comfortable closed-toe shoes
- Rain gear / weather gear

LIGHT
- Flashlight/headlamp for Dad
- Flashlight/headlamp for child

COMFORT
- Folding camp chair
- Toiletries / washcloth / wipes
- Sunscreen and bug repellent
- Water bottles
- Needed medications

FOOD
- Cooler
- Snacks your child will eat
- Favorite drinks / water
- Simple backup foods

OPTIONAL
- Fishing pole if you have one
- Games / cards / coloring supplies
- Coffee setup if needed
- Walkie-Talkie

Returning Dad Refresher: The Things We Somehow Forget

BEDDING
Bring all of it. Pillow too.

FOOD
Pack what your kid will actually eat.

WEATHER
Check the forecast before you leave. Camp goes on.

SHOES
You will walk more than you remember.

FLASHLIGHTS
One for you. One for your child.

LABELS
Put names on the things you want back.

CHAIR
You will want it at the campfire.

PRESENCE
Do not over-plan. Follow your kid's lead.

The goal is not to complete camp. The goal is to be there.

Years from now, they will remember that YOU were there.