

Right: Some camps, such as the ones at the Marcus Jewish Community Center, offer transportation there and back.

Below: A day at Trinity School Summer Camp includes swimming and other fun sports.



Above: Instructors at Act3 Productions' camps have advanced degrees in the performing arts.



A SUMMER CAMP PRIMER

DETAILS:

- Act3 Productions**
770.241.1905
act3productions.org/classes
- Camp Rockmont**
828.686.3885
rockmont.com
- Josh Powell Summer Camp**
678.369.0780
joshpowellcamp.com
- MJCCA Summer Day Camps**
678.812.4000
mjccadaycamps.org
- Trinity School Summer Camp**
404.231.8117
trinityat.org/summercamp
- Universal Tennis Academy Summer Camps**
404.497.0680
utatennis.com/
bitsy-summer-camp.php

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CHOOSING YOUR KIDS' CAMP PROVIDER

STORY: Sue Rodman

Parents put a lot of time and energy into researching child care options for their children, but that same effort doesn't always go into where the kiddos will attend summer camp. Recommendations from friends are a big plus, but parents should do their own research as well. To find the right camp, you need to ask the right questions. Here are some important things parents should ask when searching for the best day or sleep-away camp for their little ones. And remember, camps can fill up fast, so it's never too early to start planning.

How do you hire and train your staff?
This question covers a lot of ground and should give you insight into how the camp recruits its employees and the qualifications needed to be a counselor, as well as how prepared they are to work with your child. Ask about special training or certification, too. For instance, instructors at Act3 Productions' camps in Sandy Springs have advanced degrees in theater and performing arts. At the sports camp at Trinity School in Buckhead, counselors share their expertise from years of experience playing various sports in a fun, low-key environment.

Is your camp licensed or accredited?
The same licensing rules

that apply to child care centers don't necessarily apply to summer camps, but this question opens a dialogue on the subject. "Ask about certification, but don't use it as a crutch," says Jason Kay, director at Josh Powell Summer Camp in Acworth. "There are plenty of great camps that aren't American Camp Association [ACA] certified that still have high standards for employees, camper experience and safety. Do your own research and ask as many questions as needed to ensure the right fit for your child."

How will you keep my child safe?
Safety should be pervasive in the language of the overall camp culture. It begins with staff

recruiting, hiring and training. "The key word in this conversation is 'protocol,'" says Josh Drexler, associate director of Camp Rockmont, a boys' sleep-away camp in North Carolina. For instance, what are the camp's protocols around camper-staff interaction? How are the lifeguards trained? Are there nurses on staff? What is the camp's approach to preventing and addressing bullying?

What is a typical day like for my child?
Always ask to see a schedule, or if possible, visit the camp during an earlier session to see things in action. For instance, at the Universal Tennis Academy camp at the Bitsy Grant Tennis Center off Northside Drive

in Buckhead, kids don't just hit balls around all day in the hot sun. They spend a portion of each day indoors and a portion doing other activities such as tie-dyeing T-shirts or splashing around on a water slide.

Does the camp offer transportation?
For many parents, location is a big factor, but just because the camp isn't around the corner doesn't mean you should rule it out. Some options such as the camps at the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta (MJCCA) in Dunwoody and the Josh Powell camp in Acworth offer transportation from multiple Buckhead locations to their OTT campuses, and the bus ride becomes part of the camp experience. ■