



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

CAMP FITCH YMCA



Outdoor Education Guidebook

February 2024

Camp Fitch YMCA Outdoor Education

Greetings,

Welcome to Camp Fitch YMCA, a branch of the YMCA of Youngstown! We invite you to review this Information Packet to help with any questions you may have about your child's experience with the Outdoor Education programs at Camp Fitch YMCA. Inside you will find information about necessary forms, meals, a sample schedule, and a packing list.

We look forward to meeting your camper(s) and supporting them in creating lasting memories they will remember for years to come. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 814-602-8040. Together, we make kids better, forever!

Sincerely,

Brandy Duda, School Year Program Director

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ABOUT CAMP FITCH

Camp Fitch was established in 1914 as a summer camp. Our Outdoor Education program began in 1977 and has been growing ever since! We have over 65 partner schools; primarily from the Youngstown, Ohio area. Through summer camp and school year programs, such as outdoor education and weekend retreats, we serve 15,000 people annually.

CAMP FITCH YMCA MISSION & PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Our mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all with the purpose to make children better, forever. To that end, our staff is committed to develop perseverance in children through engaging programs that develop friendship, achievement, and belonging.

Camp Fitch's core values are growth mindset, servant leadership, and teamwork. We model and teach these values throughout all of our programs throughout the year. Outdoor Education is a fantastic opportunity to blend experiential learning in a nature based environment with the social and emotional skills developed through the camp experience. Outdoor Education supports those skills along with behavioral and intellectual development through friendship, achievement, and belonging. Being away from home (maybe for the first time!), trying new things, and stepping out of their comfort zone allows our campers to develop a sense of independence, resilience, decision making, and self-discipline.

SAFETY

Safety is our #1 priority. Professional program staff work directly with chaperones and counselors to provide guidance and support. All program staff are certified in first aid and CPR, have been screened through the highest standards of child safety practices, including background checks, and are trained in Child Abuse Prevention through Praesidium. Camp Fitch YMCA is accredited by the American Camp Association.



Camp Fitch YMCA is an inclusive organization that welcomes all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or disability.

BEHAVIOR AT CAMP

We want everyone to be successful at Camp Fitch. In order to create an inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment, behavior must align with Camp Fitch and the school's rules. Your camper's teachers will be responsible for behavior management. Camp Fitch staff and chaperones will correct and/or redirect low level behavioral issues until they can be brought to the teachers in charge. Camp Fitch YMCA acts as the host site, but the school will be responsible for behavioral consequences during or after their trip to Camp Fitch.

INCLUSION & BELONGING AT CAMP

Camp Fitch YMCA believes in making kids better, forever. We want all campers and guests to feel a sense of friendship, achievement, and belonging. We recognize that a successful camp experience is not one size fits all! We will work with each school to ensure we are providing a beneficial, memorable trip for all campers. We want every child to be successful at Camp. Make sure to fill out all required forms as early as you can. We will do our best to accommodate, but proper notice allows for better preparation.

We have partnered with [Kulture City](#), an organization that creates sensory accessibility and inclusion for those with invisible disabilities. With this partnership, we are able to offer sensory bags for campers in various spaces and programs at Camp. These bags include various fidget items and headphones for loud areas. We also have a "social story" on their website that allows families to learn more about Camp Fitch and prepare for their time at Camp!

OUTDOOR EDUCATION POLICIES

Supervision: The School agrees to provide adequate supervision. Schools may bring 1 chaperone for every 5 campers at no extra charge. Camp Fitch YMCA staff are not responsible for the supervision of students outside of activity areas or overnight. It is the sole responsibility of the School's teachers and chaperones to monitor behavior at all times while visiting Camp Fitch YMCA.

Programming: All participants will adhere to the rules and regulations regarding all camp facilities and programs. All program areas, including Lake Erie, are closed unless a Camp Fitch YMCA staff member is on duty. The School understands that Camp Fitch YMCA facilities and programs may be shared with other groups. All Camp Fitch YMCA staff and volunteers have the right to deny access to programs if guests are disrespectful, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or infringing upon the safety of themselves or others.

Medical: The School is responsible for dispensing all medications and overseeing any medical needs and emergencies. Camp Fitch YMCA will assist with emergencies as needed. The School will ensure that all students have a health form and signed waiver (through the School District or Camp Fitch YMCA) on file during the School's time at Camp Fitch YMCA.

Property Care: The School is responsible for the cleanliness of occupied buildings. Any existing damage/issues found during check-in shall be reported to Camp Fitch YMCA no later than the orientation meeting on the School's arrival date. Furnishings must always remain inside the residence lodges. Upon departure the School will leave lodges in a "broom clean" condition (trash gathered in receptacles, furniture in original position/condition). A \$750 cleaning fee will be assessed for lodges left in disarray. In the event of damage during the School's stay, the School will be responsible for the cost of repairs.

Quiet Hours: The Group will observe quiet hours from 11:00 pm – 7:00 am.

Motor Vehicles: Camp Fitch YMCA follows Pennsylvania driving laws. The Group will adhere to these same laws. Drivers of any motorized vehicles must be at least 18 years old AND have a valid driver's license. Guests will only drive on Camp Fitch gravel roadways and follow the 10 MPH speed limit set throughout all of Camp's premises. Camp Fitch YMCA encourages the Group to park and walk as much as possible.

Golf Carts & ATVs: Golf carts and ATVs are only permitted on Camp Fitch property with prior permission from Camp Fitch and completion of an ATV/Golf Cart Agreement. Permission will only be granted for transportation on roads for individuals who require extra assistance around camp.

Pets: Pets are not permitted at Camp Fitch YMCA at any time.

All adults checking in with the Group agree to have their driver's license or state ID used for a background check with the National Sex Offender Registry. Registered sex offenders are not permitted on Camp Fitch property.

Counselors & Chaperones



Whether your school's chaperones are high schoolers, parents, or both, all chaperones must follow Camp Fitch's Praesidium child abuse prevention policies. Child safety is our top priority. The 5 CAP rules will be reviewed during each chaperone meeting during meals.

5 Child Abuse Prevention Rules

- **No Inappropriate Touch**
- **No Alone Time**
 - We always follow the "rule of three" so no campers are alone with other campers, chaperones, or staff.
- **No Favoritism**
- **No Outside Contact**
- **No Inappropriate Language**

BEFORE CAMP STARTS

FORMS

Each school may require different forms to be completed prior to the trip, but every camper and chaperone must have a signed Hold Harmless Agreement. This is required. Please direct any questions about when/where to turn in forms to your camper's school.

Camp Fitch Camper Form:

☐ Hold Harmless Agreement

Counselor/Chaperone Forms:

☐ Hold Harmless Agreement ☐ Code of Conduct with Youth

MEDICATIONS

- All medications, including vitamins, inhalers and non-prescription medications will be collected and distributed by a designated school representative. Do not pack these items in your camper's backpack for camp.
- Please communicate any health concerns to school representative and Camp Fitch School Year Program Director prior to arrival.
- All medications must be in their original pharmacy containers.

HEALTH CARE AT CAMP

The health and safety of our campers is our number one priority. We adhere to standards and recommendations from the American Camp Association (ACA). Our staff is trained and certified in Basic Life Support (CPR) and first aid. Many are also certified lifeguards and/or wilderness first aid providers.

Prior to Your Arrival:

If your child is not feeling well on the first day of camp, please keep them home an extra day and bring them to camp when they no longer exhibit signs of illness. Campers should be fever and vomit free without the aid of medication for at least 24 hours prior to arriving at camp. If you have any questions, please contact your school's representative to institute a plan to safeguard the health of all campers and staff. If your child is too sick for school, they are definitely too sick for camp. Although we understand it is disappointing to miss out, it will keep your child, their peers, and our staff safe and healthy.

During Camp:

Upon arrival and throughout the campers' stay, counselors and staff watch for signs of fatigue, dehydration, homesickness, etc. that may lead to illness. If a camper expresses a health concern, they will be directed to the school representatives. Parents or guardians will be notified immediately if a child has a fever in excess of 100 degrees, has been vomiting, or a significant health concern. The caretaker will be asked to pick up the child immediately in any of these instances.

In the event of an injury that requires medical attention, the parent will be notified immediately. Please be assured that the school will contact parents when there is concern about a camper's health and/or when a situation is not progressing as expected.

Emergency Care:

If further treatment for an injury or illness is required, there are 3 hospitals nearby and 2 non-emergency clinics.

Hospitals

- UH Conneaut Medical Center
 - 58 W Main Rd, Conneaut, OH
 - 44030 440-593-1131
- UPMC Hamot
 - 201 State St., Erie, PA 16550
 - 814-877-6000
- AHN St Vincents
 - 232 W 25th St, Erie, PA 16544
 - 814-452-5000

Non-Emergency Clinics

- UPMC Urgent Care Erie - West
 - 2861 W 26th St Erie, PA 16506
 - 814 835 6695
- St. Vincent Hospital Urgent Care West Side
 - 4247 W 26th St Erie, PA 16506
 - 814 835 2580

LIFE AT CAMP

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

In collaboration with each school, we will design programs and activities that are the best fit for their students. Here is a basic overview of a typical schedule for an Outdoor Education trip:

Day #1: Arrival Day

11:00 AM: Arrive!
12:15 PM: Lunch (Packed lunch for this meal ONLY!)
1:15 PM: Tour of Camp
2:00 PM: Activity
3:00 PM: Activity
4:00 PM: Activity
5:20 PM: Flag Lowering
5:30 PM: Dinner
7:30 PM: Evening Program/Snack
9:00 PM: Showers & Cabin Time
10:30 PM: Lights Out

Day #2

7:15 AM: Get up Activity (Optional)
8:05 AM: Flag Raising
8:15 AM: Breakfast
9:15 AM: Morning Duties
9:30 AM: Activity
10:30 AM: Activity
12:00 PM: Lunch
1:00 PM: Activity
2:00 PM: Activity
3:00 PM: Activity
4:00 PM: Option Time
5:20 PM: Flag Lowering
5:30 PM: Dinner
7:30 PM: Evening Program & Snack
9:00 PM: Showers & Cabin Time
10:30 PM: Lights Out

Day #3

7:30 AM: Wake up & move out!
8:15 AM: Flag Raising
8:30 AM: Option Time
9:45 AM: Brunch
10:45 AM: Load buses
11:00 AM: Departure

MEALS

Campers will eat their meals in our beautiful dining hall overlooking Lake Erie. All meals are family style. Every meal offers a variety of options. Aside from the first, packed meal, there is a salad bar for every lunch and dinner. We also have the option of sunflower butter & jelly sandwiches at all meals. Our wonderful Chef Scott is very well versed in food related allergies, special dietary needs, and our 'picky eaters'. We will ensure that everyone gets something to eat. Please contact the school's volunteer organizer and Camp Fitch about any allergies or dietary concerns at least 2 weeks prior to the trip.



BIRTHDAYS AT CAMP

Many of our campers will celebrate their birthdays while at Camp Fitch. On a camper's birthday we will celebrate with them! They will be recognized at a meal with a song, receive a special dessert, and get to sign our birthday paddle. A birthday reminder to your camper's teacher prior to arrival is greatly appreciated.

PACKING FOR CAMP

Your Cabin:

Campers sleep in heated dorm style lodges or outdoor, open air cabins. All have twin mattresses. You must provide your own bedding. Some guests prefer to bring a sheet and blankets, while others are satisfied with a sleeping bag. It is up to you! All lodges have indoor bathrooms with bathroom stalls and double curtained showers for privacy.



Creating Independence

Packing for an overnight trip is an important opportunity to learn independence and problem solving. This allows for the campers to take ownership. When packing, it is absolutely crucial not to pack anything that cannot get dirty or ruined. Camp is not the time to wear your favorite new clothes. The same goes for luggage; do not send your camper with your favorite luggage. A duffel bag or suitcase for their belongings is great, but it will likely get wet or muddy. A great way to pack bedding is to use a garbage bag with a LABELED piece of tape on it. Please do not forget to send an extra labeled garbage bag for the trip home as well!



Luggage

This photo is a great depiction of the spectrum of packing. The camper on the left does not seem to have quite enough luggage. Meanwhile, the camper on the right seems to be struggling with the amount she has to carry. The middle camper is comfortably able to carry all of their belongings, while also having a reasonable amount for three days and two nights.

YMCA CAMP FITCH

Outdoor Education

Fall & Spring Packing List

Sack Lunch – bring packed lunch for the first day!

Put your camper's name on EVERYTHING! We do our best to return lost & found, but we count on the individual to claim their items.

Bedding – Packed in LABELED trash bag

- Twin size sheets* (1 flat, 1 fitted)
- Sleeping bag or blankets
- Pillow
- Pillowcase
- Extra LABELED garbage bag for trip home!
- *Counselors sleeping in outdoor cabins will need to bring full size sheets!

Clothing

- Raincoat or poncho
- Warm Jacket
- Warm clothing (options for layering are best as the weather changes and we will be both outside and inside)
- Sweatshirt
- Pajamas – 1 pair
- Underwear – 2 – 3 pairs
- Close toed shoes/sneakers – 1 pair
- Boots – 1 pair (waterproof if possible)
- Socks – 3 – 4 pairs
- Jeans or Sweatpants – 3 – 4 pairs
- Shorts if weather allows
- Seasonal weather needs: base layers, hat, gloves, snow pants, etc.

Toiletries

- Toothpaste & toothbrush
- Comb or Brush
- Soap & Shampoo
- Tissues
- Towel & Washcloth
- Deodorant
- Shower Caddy
- Flip-flops or shower shoes

Daily Use – Packed in a drawstring bag

- Water bottle
- Hat or sunglasses
- Rainjacket or poncho
- Flashlight
- Sunscreen
- Insect Repellent

Optional Items

- Sensory Headphones
- Camera (disposable) (optional)
- Field Guides
- Binoculars

Prohibited Items

- Food/snacks
- Money
- Tobacco Products
- Knives
- Archery Equipment
- Firearms
- Cell Phones
- Smart Devices
- Electronic Games
- Vapes or Electronic Smoking Devices of any kind

Note: Proper clothing is of the utmost importance to the campers' experience, especially during the winter months. We recommend that several layers of medium weight clothing be worn instead of one heavy coat. This arrangement allows "ADJUSTMENTS" to be made as weather conditions warrant. Please arrive at school the day of the Camp Fitch trip dressed accordingly and ready for a great time! Groups attending Camp Fitch are, of course, responsible for arranging good weather!!

YMCA CAMP FITCH

Outdoor Education

Winter Packing List

Sack Lunch – bring packed lunch for the first day!

Put your camper's name on EVERYTHING! We do our best to return lost & found, but we count on the individual to claim their items.

Bedding – Packed in LABELED trash bag

- Twin size sheets (1 flat, 1 fitted)
- Sleeping bag or blankets
- Pillow
- Pillowcase
- Extra LABELED garbage bag for trip home!

Clothing

- Raincoat or poncho
- Warm Jacket
- Warm clothing (options for layering are best as the weather changes and we will be both outside and inside)
- Sweatshirts and/or sweaters
- Pajamas – 1 pair
- Underwear – 2 - 3 pairs
- Close toed shoes/sneakers – 1 pair
- Boots – 1 pair (waterproof if possible)
- Socks – 3 - 4 pairs
- Jeans or Sweatpants – 3 - 4 pairs
- Seasonal weather needs: base layers, hat, gloves, snow pants, extra socks, etc.

Toiletries

- Toothpaste & toothbrush
- Comb or Brush
- Soap & Shampoo
- Tissues
- Towel & Washcloth
- Deodorant
- Shower Caddy
- Flip-flops or shower shoes

Daily Use – Packed in a drawstring bag

- Water bottle
- Hat or sunglasses
- Rainjacket or poncho
- Flashlight
- Sunscreen
- Insect Repellent

Optional Items

- Sensory Headphones
- Camera (disposable) (optional)
- Field Guides
- Binoculars

Prohibited Items

- Food/snacks
- Money
- Tobacco Products
- Knives
- Archery Equipment
- Firearms
- Cell Phones
- Smart Devices
- Electronic Games
- Vapes or Electronic Smoking Devices of any kind

Note: Proper clothing is of the utmost importance to the campers' experience, especially during the winter months. We recommend that several layers of medium weight clothing be worn instead of one heavy coat. This arrangement allows "ADJUSTMENTS" to be made as weather conditions warrant. Please arrive at school the day of the Camp Fitch trip dressed accordingly and ready for a great time! Groups attending Camp Fitch are, of course, responsible for arranging good weather!!

A NOTE ON MISSING HOME

While missing home is a natural feeling and leads to incredible developmental growth for children, it can be tough knowing your child might have some feelings of sadness while here. Camp Fitch staff are here to help. Our staff are well trained to identify and assist campers that are missing home. Our staff will work with the school's teachers to properly support the camper.

As a parent or guardian, there are some things that you can do to help prepare your camper. We believe the American Camp Association's article 'Homesickness Dos and Don'ts for Parents Preparing for Camp' provides the most helpful advice. Here are some highlights:

Prior to Camp:

- **Talk positively about the camp experience.** Let your child know they are going to have an amazing time at camp; making new friends, while trying exciting new activities.
- **Provide opportunities for your child to practice being away from you.** Sleepovers with friends/family can be a great stepping stone towards a longer sleep away experience.
- **Visit the camp.** Call for a private tour so your child can become familiar with the camp facility and some of its staff.
- **Avoid negative talk about the camp experience.** Avoid saying things like "we will miss you so much," "I don't know what I'll do without you" or "I'll be counting down the days until you return." Comments like these will cause your camper to feel guilty if they are enjoying their time at camp knowing that you are at home missing them.
- **Do NOT offer a pick-up clause.** Please don't send your child to camp with the phrase "give it a try and if you don't like it, I'll come and pick you up". If you make a pick-up clause with your child, you will inevitably be faced with the decision to either pick the child up and rob them of a valuable growing experience or break your promise and damage your credibility with your child. Neither of these outcomes are positive and both can be avoided by refraining from offering a pick-up clause.

During Camp:

- **Write positive letters with encouragement.** Let your child know you are proud of them for trying new activities and making new friends. Since they are only gone for a few days, it may be valuable to stick a note in their bag if they need it. Letters can work both ways so be mindful of the possibility to trigger homesickness.
- **Remember that homesickness is normal.** Everyone experiences homesickness to different degrees. If we call you to share that your child is homesick, it does not mean that you must come to the rescue. We invite you to work with the staff and provide information that may help your child to overcome the challenges they are facing.



Camp Fitch YMCA

Financial Assistance



Cost should not be the reason a child cannot attend Camp Fitch YMCA

Kids need camp more than ever and at Camp Fitch we are committed to work with every family to make camp affordable for your budget—last year we provided over 3,300 scholarships for our School Year and Summer Camp programs. The Financial Assistance process is about a conversation, as we believe every family is unique and just wants to do what is best for their children. We provide scholarships to families making over \$120,000 per year, so please reach out to us so we can make the Camp Fitch experience affordable for your family.

Interested in Financial Assistance for Outdoor Education and Retreats?

Please reach out to your school's representative as we work directly with them to make sure cost is not the reason your camper cannot attend!

Financial Assistance for Mahoning County Residents:

TANF Funding from Mahoning County could cover all costs for Summer Camp and School Year Programs. Please complete a TANF application (electronically or physical form) to see if you qualify.



Scan here to apply online for
Mahoning County TANF funding!

Join us for a week of summer camp!

At Camp Fitch YMCA, our Summer Camp provides kids ages 6–17 with a holistically safe community where they discover friendship and achievement. Kids feel like they belong here among our carefully vetted, highly committed, and caring staff. Our gorgeous and well-maintained site on the shore of Lake Erie has been the setting for our intentional culture of putting Christian values into practice for over a century. A transformative Fitch experience is among the most important a child can have to develop independence and self-confidence.

Flagship Experience

For kids 6–16, this is our traditional experience that kids from all over the world have enjoyed for over 100 years! We can't wait for you to come be a part of it.

Leadership Development

Engage your teenager in our leadership development experiences to develop crucial skills in areas like teamwork, empathy, responsibility, and a service mentality.

Teen Adventure Trips

Taking the Fitch Experience on the road allows us to push kids even further out of their comfort zones, build intense friendships based on trust and shared responsibility.

Health Focus

Let our special medical teams closely supervise your child while educating and encouraging them on their journey toward independence.

Tech Focus

Does your child love working on computers? Let them do that all week with like-minded boys and girls while getting a healthy dose of fresh air and sunshine!

Equestrian Focus

For boys and girls who love horses, being an Outrider is hands-on, in the saddle fun at summer camp!

Farm Focus

We have created an engaging farm focus to teach children about raising animals, planting seeds and sustainability.

Drone Focus

For boys and girls who love flying drones, Drone Focus will teach children how to become an expert pilot!

