



Checklist for Families: Age-by-Age Camp Skill Builder

This checklist focuses on skills families can practice with their deaf or hard of hearing child before going to a camp. Deaf and Hard of Hearing children can build confidence and develop a stronger sense of identity, and that can grow after camp.

Preparation may look different for:

Day camp • Overnight camp • Family camp or weekend programs

Preschool (Ages 3–5)

Focus: Basic routines and simple communication

Before going to a camp, practice:

- ☐ Using signs/words for various daily routines; for example: bathroom, help, eat, stop, tired
- ☐ Following simple two-step directions
- ☐ Managing toileting routines with minimal support
- ☐ Recognizing their name in print (label on backpack, cubby)
- ☐ Participating in group activities for short periods of time
- ☐ Separating from parent/caregiver for short, structured activities

For overnight camps:

- ☐ Practicing bedtime routines away from home (if appropriate)

Why this matters: Practicing familiar routines, simple signs and words, and short separations ahead of time helps children feel safe and ready for their camp experience.

Elementary (Ages 6-10)

Focus: Social skills and growing independence

Before camp, practice:

- ☐ Introducing name, age, and where they're from
- ☐ Asking to join a group ("Can I play?")
- ☐ Asking for clarification if they miss information
- ☐ Managing hygiene routines independently
- ☐ Keeping track of belongings (with reminders)
- ☐ Following a daily schedule
- ☐ Identifying safe adults (counselor, nurse, director)

For overnight camps:

- ☐ Organizing clothes and personal items
- ☐ Understanding cabin expectations

For family camps:

- ☐ Participating independently in peer groups for short periods

Why this matters: Practicing communication, organization, and daily routines helps children build the independence and confidence needed to connect with peers and navigate camp successfully.

Middle & High School (Ages 11+)

Focus: Self-management and self-advocacy

Before camp, practice:

- ☐ Communicating preferred language and access needs
- ☐ Self-advocacy phrases ("Please repeat." "Face me." "I prefer ASL.")
- ☐ Managing time and responsibilities independently
- ☐ Handling minor peer conflicts respectfully
- ☐ Following safety procedures
- ☐ Keeping track of personal belongings without reminders

For overnight or national camps:

- ☐ Understanding phone/contact policies
- ☐ Managing hygiene and routines independently
- ☐ Navigating new peer groups confidently

For family camps:

- ☐ Balancing independence while family is present

Why this matters: Practicing self-advocacy, responsibility, and communication preferences helps older campers navigate new environments confidently and ensure they have the access they need to fully participate.

Across All Ages

Before camp, ensure your child:

- ☐ Knows how to ask for help
- ☐ Knows where to go or who to contact in an emergency
- ☐ Understands basic camp vocabulary
- ☐ Has clear communication access