



Checklist for Families: Is My Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child Ready for Camp?

Every child is different. There is no “perfect” age for camp — readiness is about comfort, communication, and confidence.

Your child may not check every box below — and that’s okay. Sometimes camp is exactly the experience that helps a child grow, build confidence, and “break out of their shell.”

Use this checklist as a guide to reflect on your child’s readiness in the areas identified below.

Emotional Readiness

- ☐ My child can separate from me for short periods (school, playdates, activities).
- ☐ My child can express feelings (excited, nervous, scared, happy) in ASL and/or spoken language.
- ☐ My child understands that camp is temporary and that I will return.
- ☐ My child shows curiosity or excitement about meeting other Deaf/Hard of Hearing children.
- ☐ My child can recognize when they need help with a task or a situation.

Why this matters: The ability to separate comfortably is one of the strongest indicators of camp readiness. If some of these skills feel new, a short day camp experience is a natural place to begin building them.

Communication Readiness

- ☐ My child can introduce themselves (name, age, where they’re from).
- ☐ My child can ask for clarification if they do not understand.
- ☐ My child can tell someone if something feels wrong or uncomfortable or when they need help with something.
- ☐ My child has access to language (ASL, spoken language, or both) that supports independence.
- ☐ My child understands basic camp-related vocabulary (sleep, cabin, counselor, bathroom, activity, etc.).

Why this matters: Camp often strengthens communication skills, especially in fully accessible Deaf environments.

Independence Skills

- ☐ My child can manage basic hygiene (tooth brushing, changing clothes, bathroom routines) with minimal support.
- ☐ My child can keep track of personal belongings (with reminders if needed).
- ☐ My child can follow a simple schedule or daily routine.
- ☐ My child can problem-solve small peer conflicts with adult support.

Why this matters: Your child's current level of independence is a practical guide for choosing between a day camp and an overnight experience.

Practical Considerations

- ☐ I understand how the camp communicates with families.
- ☐ I know who the main contact person is.
- ☐ I feel comfortable with the camp's safety and emergency procedures.
- ☐ My child has had opportunities to meet Deaf adults or peers before (if possible).

Why this matters: Parent readiness matters too. Feeling informed and confident reduces stress for everyone.

A Gentle Reminder

It is completely normal for both children and parents to feel excited, nervous, proud, or even unsure about camp. Mixed feelings are a natural part of growth. Many Deaf and Hard of Hearing children return from camp more confident, stronger in their language, more independent, proud of who they are, and more connected to their community.

Sometimes the question is not, “Is my child ready?” Sometimes it is, “What kind of camp experience would help my child grow next?”