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Summer is just around the corner, and if you are contemplating sending your kids to summer camp, you will want to start looking now. Many camps fill up early and the sooner you make a decision the better. Whether you plan to use camp as an alternative to summer day care or as a means for your child to learn and have fun, here are some tips to choosing one that will be a perfect fit for you and your child.

To begin with you will need to decide if you are going to send your child to day camp or overnight camp. Every child is different and you know your child best. Things to consider in making this decision are the child's age and whether or not they can handle being away from home. Younger children usually do better with a day camp, where older children sometimes really enjoy doing an overnight camp. Some camps even offer ½ day options, which can be the perfect time length for some kids. Finances can also play into this decision. Day camps can cost up to several hundred dollars per week and overnight camps can reach into the thousands of dollars. Many times there is a sibling discount, so make sure to ask if you're signing up more than one child. It is best to determine your budget before looking around. There is such a variety of camp options that it can be overwhelming. For starters there are traditional camps that offer a variety of activities throughout the day like arts and crafts, games, individual and team play, swimming and more. Most of these camps allow the child to choose activities that most interest them.

There are also specialized camps that usually focus on more specific activities, such as academic camps that focus on science, chess or math, for example. Then there are sports camps that can encompass a variety of sports or just one sport like soccer or baseball. Other specialized camps you might discover are horse riding, dance camp, drama camp and farm camp, to name just a few. In deciding on where to send your child you will need to look closely at what their interests are. Be careful to not send them to a sports camp just because you want them to be more athletic. This wishful thinking many times will backfire and set your child up for a miserable time.

Before making your decision on which camp to send your child to it is a good idea to get some referrals. Other parents and teachers can be a great resource. You should also find out who runs the camp and what the counselors are like. Are they adults or older children and what are their qualifications? Do they have to go through training and background checks? How will they handle discipline and other issues that might rise? How long has the camp been taking place and what is their return rate? How many kids participate? Some camps may be small with just 10-50 kids, where others may have 500 or more. Where is the camp located, and what are the facilities like? If possible you may want to check out the location in person before enrolling. Will the camp accommodate any special needs your child might have?

No matter what type of camp you choose, your child will most likely have a great time. They should also walk away from the experience having learned something new, increased confidence and even improved social skills. Even camps that are purely for fun still help build character and peer relationships.

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