



Family Handbook 2018

# Campers & Families!

## Welcome, the Fun Starts Here!

Welcome to the YMCA Family Handbook! In here you'll find everything you need to know about being a YMCA camper and a YMCA parent or guardian. Whether it's your first time at Day Camp or you are an experienced YMCA camp family, we would like you to take the time to read about our programs and policies. At the YMCA of Niagara, we are continually evolving and it is important that families read up on Day Camp before attending – whether you are coming for the summer, a week, or even a few days.

Our programs are more than just fun! They're purposefully designed with your child in mind to foster independence and personal growth! We are excited to share all we have planned for this year with you and your family! We believe in the power of camp and the uniqueness of a YMCA Day Camp experience! We are already working with our staff and volunteers to plan exciting activities, new adventures and a whole lot of friendship and fun! We are finding new ways to make your time at the YMCA Day Camps the best it can be and can't wait for you to arrive, for an incredible experience this year!

So get excited and get ready. We are!

Yours in camping,

The YMCA of Niagara Day Camp Team

### **Contents:**

Pg. 3: Day Camp the YMCA Way

Pg. 4: Code of Conduct

Pg. 5: Value Based Approach

Pg. 6: A Typical Day at Camp

Pg. 7: Preparing your Child for Camp

Pg. 8: Frequently Asked Questions

Pg. 9: Camp Communication



# Day Camp the YMCA Way

## We Build Strong Kids

While each YMCA Camp is unique in its own way, all of our camps provide opportunities for campers to learn and grow. Campers will learn new skills, develop greater self-confidence and create

## We Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

At Day Camp, we provide a healthy, safe and secure environment for all participants. We are a fully integrated Day Camp that values diversity and the differences that form our camp community.

## We Hire Role Models

As camp staff, we are aware of the importance of encouraging our campers to reach new goals. To ensure high quality leadership at YMCA Camps, all staff and volunteers are carefully selected based on their maturity, experiences and ability to role model YMCA values.

## We Build Relationships

At the YMCA we understand that children and youth need positive peer and adult relationships in their lives. We create a camp environment that encourages campers to develop lasting relationships with their peers. At the same time we want to develop a relationship with our camp parents. We welcome you to ask us any questions and share your feedback.



## We Promote Learning

YMCA camps provide opportunities for our campers to learn and grow. Through a combination of direct instruction and discovery learning techniques, campers will develop greater self-reliance and self-confidence that will carry with them their whole lives.

## We Are Committed to Quality

In Niagara, YMCA Day Camps are committed to maintaining the highest standard of quality to ensure a fun, safe and memorable camp experience for all.



## Camper Code of Conduct

YMCA of Niagara Day Camp staff use a positive, values based approach to guide appropriate behaviours and to encourage and reinforce positive behaviours. Campers are expected to follow YMCA Day Camp behaviour guidelines and to interact appropriately with their fellow campers, staff and volunteers.

Our goal is for each camper to have a positive and memorable experience. In order to achieve this, the safety of each camper is of the utmost importance. Parent/guardian(s) and campers must recognize a personal responsibility to learn and follow safety and other rules established by the YMCA.

All campers are expected to follow the YMCA behaviour guidelines, and to interact in a positive and appropriate manner with their fellow campers, staff, and other members of the YMCA Day Camp community. Behaviour (including but not limited to: harassment; verbal threats; physical behaviour; bullying; etc.) that negatively impacts others physically or emotionally will result in immediate dismissal or removal from camp at the discretion of the YMCA of Niagara. Campers may also be removed from camp as a result of behaviour that places themselves at risk. Refunds will not be granted for dismissal prior to the end of the camp day or week.



## Behaviour Guidelines

All campers:

- are responsible for their actions, choices and words;
- will respect each other and their environment;
- should be honest and true to their word;
- will care for themselves and those around them;
- will make healthy and safe choices; and
- will value diversity and seek to include others.

### Camp Parent/Guardian(s)

In any instance where a participant is being sent home from camp (for behaviour or health reasons), it is the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian(s) to make arrangements for the participant to be picked up immediately.

As appropriate, the YMCA will work with the parent/guardian(s) to develop a joint plan to address inappropriate behaviour. Parent/guardian(s) will be required to play an active role in supporting the camp staff in implementing behaviour management strategies.

When you register your child for YMCA Day Camp you are also agreeing to follow, support and adhere to the YMCA of Niagara Code of Conduct and Behaviour Guidelines. Contradictory behaviour may result in your camper(s) being removed from Day Camp at the sole discretion of the YMCA of Niagara.

In the event a camper's behaviour results in damages or harm to property, belongings, an individual, etc., the parent/guardian is responsible for covering any applicable financial expense(s).

*"Our children have been going to the YMCA for many years - they both grew up in the toddler program and have moved from toddlers, to preschool, to summer care, to before /after care and now day camps. We are very proud to have our children enrolled in this community organization."*

*-Camp Parent*

# Our values based approach

Our values help us distinguish right from wrong and provide a foundation for sound judgment and decision making. Values, which are sometimes referred to as character, are the basis of who we are, how we live and how we treat others. The values we try to instill at the YMCA, through character development are the six “Core Values” of Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Honesty, Health and Inclusion.

## Value Beads

At YMCA Day Camp, value beads play an important role as a sign of character and personal achievement. As an important form of recognition, beads at camp promote positive behaviour, and are worn as a constant reminder of what we value as a camp community. At the beginning of the week, as part of opening circle on the first day, each camper will receive a necklace or bracelet and a white bead representing friendship. Throughout the week, campers will be presented with opportunities to earn beads. This can be achieved through participation in each program area and by demonstrating each of the six core values. Beads are awarded at the end of every day.

### Day Camp Themes

At YMCA Day Camp, we believe that each child’s imagination and individuality should be celebrated. Our Day Camp activities are planned around an exciting theme. Campers should come to camp prepared to embark on adventure which includes crafts, activities and games based on the theme. To add to the fun, campers and staff are encouraged to dress up for the camp theme every Wednesday! To see our Day Camp themes, visit our website at [ymcadaycamp.ca](http://ymcadaycamp.ca)



### Values Beads

Value beads are awarded for demonstrating the six YMCA core values:

Caring (Red)	Acting with compassion and concern for the well-being of others
Health (Pink)	Being committed to physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development
Honesty (Blue)	Demonstrating integrity and trustworthiness
Inclusiveness (Purple)	Appreciating diversity. Striving to be open to all. Seeking to understand differences and find common ground.
Respect (Yellow)	Recognizing and protecting the inherent worth of every person, including oneself
Responsibility (Green)	Being dependable and accountable for choices, actions and commitments

## A Typical Day at Camp

### What does a typical day of camp look like?

8:30am	Travel to Camp/Station Activities
9:00am	Opening Circle
9:30am	Camp Group Time
10:00am	Activity 1
10:30am	Snack & Sunscreen break
10:45am	Activity 2
11:45am	Lunch
12:30pm	Structured Free Time
1:15pm	Activity 3
2:15pm	Snack & Sunscreen break
2:30pm	Activity 4
3:30pm	Value Bead ceremony
4:00pm	Closing Circle
4:30pm	Depart from Camp/Station

### YMCA of Niagara Day Camp Outcomes

At the YMCA of Niagara our goal is for each camper to have an amazing experience that positively influences their development. We feel so strongly about it that since 2014 we have been programming specifically for the results. We call it “Outcome Based Programming”, and here is what we strive to have each camper experience at YMCA Day Camp:

- Play and have fun
- Be creative and use their imagination
- Participate in 60 minutes of physical activity
- Develop fundamental movement skills
- Demonstrate the YMCA values
- Be challenged or learn something new
- Develop social skills and friendships
- Feel safe and included



## Activity descriptions

**Opening and Closing circles:** Our opening and closing circles set the tone for the beginning and end of the day, with a variety of traditional camp songs, and fun large group activities.

**Camper group time:** This small group time is one of the most important program elements at YMCA of Niagara Day Camp. This is the time when campers will get to know their counsellor and other members of their group. The day at camp is full of activities and games that keep the campers involved and engaged. This time together will also allow counsellors to introduce the YMCA Bead Program to the group.

**Structured free time:** Understanding that each camper has their own unique interests, we give campers a portion of the day where they can choose which activity they want to participate in. This gives campers opportunities to further develop skills and personal passions while building a relationship with the counsellor leading the activity.

**Generic camp activities:** Every camp will include regular camp activities in addition to the camp’s focus. These include: cooperative games, sing songs, sports, field games, arts and crafts, swimming etc. Day Camp Counsellors are constantly monitoring the campers to make sure that the next game, sport or activity starts before the campers are asking what are we doing next.

**Indoor Camp:** Camp activities are based in an indoor location, but children will be outside for a portion of the day, weather permitting.

**Outdoor Camp:** All camp activities take place outdoors, rain or shine. While each site has access to picnic shelters or pavilions, campers need to be dressed accordingly.

For more information on camp programming, visit [ymcadaycamp.ca](http://ymcadaycamp.ca)

# Preparing Your Child for Camp!

For many children, going to summer camp is the first time they will take a bus or meet new children outside of their school environment. To ensure your child has a positive experience, follow these tips:

- Talk about the camp program and some activities your child will be involved in.
- Talk about the routine of the day and ask your child to help pack their knapsack.
- Provide an opportunity for your child to talk to his/her camp counsellor during the pre-camp phone call.

## What to Bring to Camp

Our Camp days are busy! To ensure your child is prepared, please make sure the following items are packed:

- Swimsuit and towel (in plastic bag)
- SPF 30+ water resistant sunscreen. Sunscreen should be applied before camp and reapplied throughout the day. Choose a sunscreen that will be easy for your child to reapply themselves.
- Running shoes
- Healthy, litter free and nut free lunch and snacks
- Clean and refillable water bottle
- Weather & Camp Appropriate Clothing
- Hats & Sunglasses
- Extra clothes for Outdoor camps are recommended.



## Lost & Found

The YMCA cannot be held responsible for any lost or stolen items. Please clearly label all items with your camper's first and last name. Please do not send your child to camp with any electronic devices or valuables (cellphones, cameras, money, and game systems). For health and safety reasons and as a result of the volume of items, Lost and Found items will be kept at the camp site during the week it was lost. At the end of that week, the Lost and Found items from all sites will come to the local YMCA membership branch.

At the end of the summer all unclaimed items will be returned to the Day Camp Office at the Walker Family YMCA and given to a local charity during September. If items are identified with the owner's full name, the YMCA will attempt to contact the owner for pick-up.

## Snacks and Lunches

At the YMCA, we strive to be environmentally sensitive and encourage a healthy lifestyle. Please send your child with litterless, nutritional snacks and lunches every day plus plenty of water. As we have children in our programs with life-threatening allergies to nuts and nut products, we respectfully ask that you provide nut-free snacks and lunches. Some good alternatives for peanut butter sandwiches are: hummus, honey and fruit spreads, cheese, fruits and vegetables, "make your own" lunchables, pasta salad or leftovers.

## Litter-less Lunch Tips

- Purchase a reusable drink container and fill it up each day with water
- Avoid single-serve snack items in disposable packaging and use reusable containers instead
- Use an insulated lunch bag to keep items fresh

# Frequently Asked Questions

*You've come to the right place for information about camp! You may not find all your camp questions answered below, but this is a very good place to start. For more information refer to our Camp Communication section.*

## Can I send medication to camp?

YMCA Camp staff will administer only prescription medication. For safety reasons, parents are required to sign a medication authorization form, outlining dosages and times to be given. Please send only one day's dose each day. Medication must be sent to camp in the original pill bottle, clearly labeled with the camper's name, date, name of drug, instructions for storage and administration.

## Are camps nut free?

In serving the public, the YMCA develops and implements practices that encourage a safe, shared environment and recognizes that campers with severe allergies may be exposed to allergens while participating at the YMCA. Education and awareness are important components in the prevention of anaphylaxis. It is important to recognize that because of the public nature of our facilities, we cannot assume the responsibility to ensure an "allergen-free" environment.

To further promote safety and address high-risk allergies, specifically with food, we ask that parents:

- notify the YMCA of life threatening allergies
- complete YMCA medical forms to provide authorization to administer EpiPen
- ensure the camper has their EpiPen Kit with them at camp
- ensure the camper is wearing a Medic Alert bracelet

## Can my child attend a camp designed for an older age group?

In order to ensure full participation in all program aspects (including swimming) and to implement developmentally appropriate activities, campers must be the designated age the camp is designed for prior to attending the camp. If the camper is not the correct age by the start of the camp, then they cannot attend this particular camp.

## What qualifications do your staff have?

Members of the YMCA Day Camp Staff Team are chosen for their ability to role model YMCA values to campers entrusted to their care. We carefully select each staff member for their interest in children and their experience in camping and recreation. Our staff know the importance of a safe environment which ensures the right combination of fun and challenge. Our intensive pre-camp training sessions focus on the personal skills and knowledge necessary to ensure your child's experience is positive, safe and fun. YMCA staff hold a current Standard First Aid & CPR certificate, current Criminal Reference Check and are trained in YMCA Healthy Child Development.

## Can I meet the Camp Staff before Camp Starts?

Parents will receive a "camper call" from your camper's counsellor prior to the week of camp that they will be attending. They will introduce themselves and give you some information about the week ahead! This is a great opportunity to ask any questions that you might have as well as relay any important information about your camper!



## What is the Refund/ Cancellation Policy?

- All deposits are non-refundable.
- Request for refunds made up to two weeks or 14 days prior to camp will be issued, less the deposit. A cheque will be mailed within 14 days business days. Refund requests can be made in person or by emailing [ymcadaycamp@niagara.ymca.ca](mailto:ymcadaycamp@niagara.ymca.ca).
- Camp fees are non-refundable within two weeks or 14 days of camp. Exceptions may be considered for confirmed medical reasons (with proper documentation).
- Refunds will not be given if the camper is sent home for misconduct.

## Can I get a tax receipt for camp?

Camp fees are deductible. Families can go online at [ymcaofniagara.org](http://ymcaofniagara.org) by the end of February 2019 to access a printable statement for tax purposes.

## When and where can I drop off my camper?

Parents may drop off campers at all camp sites beginning at 8:00am and have until 5:00pm to pick up if not using the extended care option.

Parents using extended care and/ or the busing option from the YMCA can drop campers off between 7:30am and 8:25am, and pick up between 4:30pm and 6:00pm. Extended care is only available at YMCA Membership branches.

Where applicable busing is available from the YMCA Health, Fitness and Aquatic Centre to the camp site. Campers must be signed in by 8:25am in order to catch the bus, and should arrive back by 4:45pm. Please ensure you have selected and paid for busing in order to take advantage of this option.

If you are going to drop off your camper later in the camp day at the camp site or pick them up early we ask that you inform their counsellor in advance or call the camp hotline at 905 934 9755 x 280.

## Where can I park when I am dropping off or picking up my child?

If you are dropping off/ picking up campers at a YMCA of Niagara branch we ask that you pull into a parking spot and come into the YMCA to sign your camper in/ out. By law, we are required to keep the traffic lanes or circles in front of the YMCA Membership branch clear for emergency vehicles.

## How do I sign my camper in and out?

Parents escort campers to a YMCA Camp Staff in a designated location and sign him/her in and out on a camp roster. We require your initial to sign in the camper. Our responsibility begins when you initial the camp roster. Parents/guardians or other authorized individuals will be asked to present valid government issued photo identification. This is for the safety of your child(ren).

## What if someone else is picking up my child?

Only the individuals specified on the registration form as authorized pick-ups can sign out campers. In the event that someone other than those listed on the registration form is picking up your child from camp, we require notification in advance. That person will be asked for picture identification and must be 16 years of age or older.

## Can my child walk home from camp?

Children ages 10 and older can be given authorization to sign themselves in and out of camp. A parent/ guardian must complete an authorization form prior to the camper signing themselves in or out of camp. The authorization form is available online at [ymcadaycamp.ca](http://ymcadaycamp.ca) or can be picked up at any camp location.

## Can I visit my child at camp?

Parent(s) or guardian(s) identified on the camper information form are welcome to visit them at camp. Parents are asked to let the camp Head Counsellor or Supervisor know you have arrived on site, so they can have you sign in and help you find the camper group.

## What happens if it rains?

Camp will run, rain or shine. On rainy days campers will have access to a shelter and counsellors will run modified camp activities. We recommend that you send campers with extra clothing and a rain coat on rainy days as some outdoor activities may still occur. In the event of extreme weather campers may be bused to an alternative location (YMCA, school, arena, etc.). When you register for camp you can give the YMCA permission to transport your son/ daughter by bus in the event of extreme weather, at the discretion of the YMCA. If campers are moved an automated call will be sent out to the primary phone number.

## Who swims with my campers?

Day Camp staff will facilitate activities in the pool and swim with campers. YMCA or Municipal lifeguards supervise camp swim times.

## Why does my camper under the age of 7 not have swimming?

The YMCA of Niagara is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable aquatic experience. The following age restriction admission criteria for children under 10 years of age are based on Public Health requirements. Campers under the age of 7 years old attending camps that swim at a YMCA, Niagara Falls, Beamsville or Port Colborne Municipal pool will participate in water games or splash pad.

Campers 7 to 10 years of age: If able to successfully demonstrate comfort in the water and complete the facility swim test (2 widths uninterrupted), children may swim independently. If not able to complete the swim test, children must be accompanied by an adult/ guardian in a 4:1 ratio in the shallow end of the pool.

*"I can trust the kids are safe, as they are encouraged to learn important skills and great values while making wonderful memories at day camp."*

*-Camp Parent*

## What if my camper gets sick at camp?

If a camper's illness prevents him/her from participating or being comfortable in normal activities, or if staff cannot provide the care required, the camper will be considered too ill to attend camp. Parents will be contacted immediately to pick up the camper. If the parent cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be notified.

## When should I keep my camper home from camp?

Campers with any type of communicable disease must be kept home from camp until symptoms are treated for more than 24 hours or are not present depending on the type of illness. A doctor's note may be required prior to the camper returning at the request of the Day Camp Director.

## Who do I call to report an absent camper?

If a camper is not attending camp please call your local YMCA of Niagara membership branch prior to 8:00am.

Fort Erie YMCA	905 871 9622
Niagara Centre YMCA	905 735 9622
Niagara Falls YMCA	905 358 9622
Niagara West YMCA	905 309 9622
Port Colborne YMCA	905 835 9622
St. Catharines Walker Family YMCA	905 934 9622

## Who can I talk to if I have questions?

When dropping off your child, please feel free to ask their counsellors any questions you may have. Newsletters will be handed out each Monday with specific information about the program planned for the week ahead.

Who can I talk to about my child's camp experience? If you have a concern about our camp we ask that you share it with us immediately so that we can ensure the best experience for you and your child(ren). Please refer to our camp communication section on the next page.

## Camp Communication

We know that effective, ongoing communication is necessary to ensure that you and your child have a positive camp experience. Following are the methods we'll use to communicate with you during camp:

**Pre-camp communication** – Prior to your child's week at camp you will receive an email that will confirm registration details about the upcoming week. This will also be followed up by a personal call from your child's counsellor that will allow you and your child to ask any specific questions you may have.

**Phone/email** – If you have any questions, please refer to the contact information section on this page. In the event of an emergency, contact us directly at the Day Camp Office: 905-934-955 x280.

**Camp Newsletters** – Newsletters will be handed out each Monday with specific information about the program planned for the week ahead! In this will be information about the special events for your child's specific camp!

**Parent survey** – Each year, we strive to improve our programs and we rely on your feedback! Please ensure we have your email address on file so that we can send you a parent satisfaction survey following the end of camp. Or complete a survey in person at your local YMCA branch. Your valuable feedback will enable us to make necessary changes and improvements.

*"My daughter enjoyed her time at camp this summer! The staff was amazing, very friendly! She made lots of new friends!"*

*- Camp Parent*





## Vision

Inspiring health, wellness and community – for life.

## Mission

The YMCA of Niagara is a charity, open to all, providing leadership and opportunities for people and their community to grow in spirit, mind, and body.

## YMCA of Niagara Day Camp

25 YMCA Drive  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2N 7P9  
905 934 9755 x 280

 [facebook.com/ymcaniagara](https://facebook.com/ymcaniagara)

 [twitter.com/ymcaniagara](https://twitter.com/ymcaniagara)

 [instagram.com/ymcaniagara](https://instagram.com/ymcaniagara)

## Privacy Statement

As a charitable, community based association; the YMCA of Niagara is committed to protecting your right to privacy. The personal information you share with the YMCA is used to support the work of the YMCA. For further information, please visit [ymcaofniagara.org](https://ymcaofniagara.org).

Charitable registration number  
**11930 7064 RR0001**

