



Youth Leader Handbook

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Welcome to Camp!

Monkey Business Camp is better with you. Your kindness, energy, and willingness to help make camp work!!

Returning YLs help lead by example and create a welcoming environment from day one.

New YLs bring new perspectives and energy that strengthen our community.

Together, you help make camp a place where everyone feels included, supported, and ready to try new things.



Monkey Business Camp's Basic Values:

- **Fun:** Camp is about creating fun times for you, the campers, and the staff.
- **Respect:** We balance the 1st rule of MBC with respect, to include consideration and care for others, the places we host camp, the equipment, and ourselves.
- **Gratitude:** Studies have shown that focusing on what we are grateful for, as well as receiving and giving thanks, promotes a sense of calm and well-being.

Social-Emotional Work

Most of the time camp feels good!

You help create that by being involved.

When things get harder, you can step into leadership.

Youth Leaders:

- Listen & show empathy
- Help kids work through challenges



You might help a camper take a break, solve a problem, or follow a limit to keep camp safe for all.

This is one of the most important parts of being a YL.



You're not alone. Staff are here to support you!



DAILY SCHEDULE FROM START TO FINISH

Every day follows a similar schedule
with different events and activities in
each of the time slots.





MBC Daily Schedule - General



8:30-9	     	Camper Drop-off (YL 8:25)
9:15-10:30	  	1st AM Activity
10:30-11:15	   	Handwash, Snack, Toasts, Circle
11:15-12:30	  	2nd AM Activity
12:30-1	   	Handwash, Lunch, Toasts
1-1:45	  	Field game, active play
1:45-2:30	    	Chill Time Books, Journals, Table games
2:30-3:30	  	PM Activity
3:30-4:30	    	Clean up, LNT, Handwash, Snack, Closing Circle
4:10-4:30	     	Camper Pick-up (YL 4:35)



Morning Drop-off & Free Play before 1st Activity time

Campers are arriving and settling in.

Your role: Help kids feel comfortable and included.

- Learn names and help kids connect with you & each other. Welcome them each day.
- Start conversations:
 - Have you been to camp before?
 - When is your birthday? Do you have any pets?
- Introduce kids to each other, invite them to play a game, and use their names. A lot.
- Help with bathroom trips as needed. We stay in site of staff or in groups of 3 or more (Rule of 3)—this helps keep everyone safe.



Bathrooms and the Rule of 3



Campers **always** ask Yls/staff before going to the bathroom.

- If one camper needs to go, **ask if others can go too.**
 - Ask if someone looks like they need to go

In Summer –

- Public Bathrooms, so we **always, always check if empty 1st**
- **Ask campers to wait at the cone while you look inside** to make sure the bathroom is empty. If there's a door, knock 1st
- **You wait out at the cone while campers go inside**

Bathrooms are **gender neutral** at camp. Use any.

We always use the stalls unless someone cannot wait.

Rule of 3 - No one is alone 1:1 with a camper

This can look like:

- Two YLs with 1 camper
- One YL with 2+ campers
- One staff + one YL if helping a camper change clothes

Daily Schedule: Morning Activity Times

Activities include games, art, a walk, or a guest-led project

Your role:

- Join in and participate
- Help kids stay engaged
- Support the staff leading

💡 Have an idea? Ask your Site Director if you can help lead something. Ex: friendship string, banana tag, a board game, a walking song or chant...



Nature Walks

We walk to parts of Tilden Park and walk around the block or to a park near Berkwood Hedge School.

Notice what's around you— birds, turtles, lizards, or something new, the moments kids get excited about

- **Your role: be present and engaged**
 - Yls spread out amongst the campers
 - Keep the line together, help the back keep up
 - Cross streets/parking lots ALL Together
 - Campers between YL/staff in street/lot
 - Help kids to hear any Staff directions
 - Notice when some needs a little extra support
 - Songs & chants are fun on a walk
 - Help campers meet each other & start conversations
 - Walk with different campers each time so you get to know the whole group



Tree Climbing at Camp

Staff decide each time if tree climbing makes sense – depends on tree, ability to supervise well, time.

1. Three points of contact on the tree all the time
(2 hands & 1 foot OR 2 feet & 1 hand)

2. Choose strong branches

Stand on branches as wide as your thigh

Hang from branches as wide as your upper arm

3. Stay within Staff reach

Not higher than a staff on the ground can reach you

When kids want to climb higher -

→ Affirm their skills & help them follow camp safety rules

→ Encourage them to come with family & climb more then

Your role: stay nearby,

notice what kids are ready for,

keep climbing safe and fun

Mystery Tree has specific guidelines, check with staff.



Daily Schedule: Cleanup Before Snack

After 1st AM Activity: clean up → wash hands → snack

Some areas need a quick tidy, others get all cleaned up

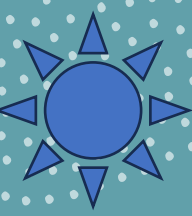
- Art projects - cleaned up, table clear
- Legos/Blocks – get off the ground & stay out
- Games – pieces and cards in boxes & stay out
- Sports – in bag/crate, pile up hula hoops
- Meadows Yoga balls - together under a big cloth so less distracting at snack & circle
- **Your role: Help clean up and get kids to join you**



Everyone works together

**“If 1 person takes 10 minutes,
10 people take 1 minute!”**





Handwashing, Snacks, Lunch, & Toasts

Before eating → handwashing



Your role:

- Get to the bathrooms before campers
- Help kids line up
- Give soap + remind kids to scrub
- Remind kids to bring water bottle with snack/lunch, and to sit down
- Sit with kids , spread out so YLs all around

Helpful phrases:

- “Let’s all wash up so we can get to snack!”
- “Find a spot near our group”

Tips:

- Wash **your** hands & grab **your** food & water
- Use snack and lunch to connect with campers

Your role:

- Help campers open containers
- Help kids sit down while eating
- Talk with campers - jokes, questions, tell stories
- At AM snack remind kids to save food for later
- Remind: no sharing food (allergies)
- Help kids pack it all up when done
- If no compost, kids can pack it back up and do it at home.

Ys at Snack and Lunch



Sitting and talking with kids is a great way to connect with each other!

Toasts - Staying Hydrated after snacks and lunch

Your role:

- Get your water bottle + remind kids to get theirs
- Help kids refill at water fountains
- Join in! (do a toast, repeat one, help lead)
- Help the group stay focused

If a camper doesn't have water:

“Want help refilling your bottle?”

→ Ask staff if they need to use one of ours

If kids are distracted:

Repeat the toast & be interested yourself



Daily Schedule: Circle/Group



After snack & before the 2nd AM Activity

Time for → games • songs • movement • sharing

Your role:

- Sit with the group and be engaged
- Help kids focus (sit between 2 kids distracting each other)
- Show enthusiasm for what's being led
- Join in to co-lead songs, games, movement

At the start of camp:

Help kids learn names and talk about Fun & Respect

Always:

Help kids try new games & Show appreciation for each other

Songs and Chants

Singing is fun to do with a group and brings energy and joy to camp!



Before camp: check out the [songs tip sheet](#) watch videos + learn a few!

- Return youth leaders, learn another
 - **Camp songs can be**
 - Repeat-after-me or
 - Everyone together
 - **Your role:**
 - Join in and sing along
 - Support repeat-after-me songs (sing first, repeat with campers, or both)
 - Try leading or co-leading with other YLs/staff
- Leading tip:** There's no one "right way" to lead—stand where you feel comfortable and go for it.

Back to the Daily Schedule: Lunch into Field Game

Lunch routine same as snack → pack up stuff & clean up ground

Near the end of lunch → **Toasts** to encourage drinking

After lunch:

- YLs help with clean up and packing up
- Some YLs help set up the field game

Field Game: Time to move and play together

Your role:

- Ask staff if they want help to set up the game
- Ask staff if they want ideas for games to play

Support participation:

- Keep energy focused on the field game
- We don't have table games or art after lunch
- Kids can free play on the field, watch the game, at Breaks use Side Yard, at BL Woods often open

→ ***“Time for playing board games, drawing, & art is coming up soon!”***



Games & Activities Intro

We have handbooks for [Games](#) and [Nature connection activities](#), and many chances to lead—during circle, free play, and transitions.

Jumping in with ideas is a great, low-pressure way to build confidence.

New YLs: Learn 1–2 games to try

Returning YLs: Add something new to your “back pocket”



Start small with a game during free play with a few campers and build up to a whole group game.





When staff ask you to help start a game, here are easy ways to jump in:

- **Set up the game** (cones, boundaries, materials)
- **Announce the game**
- **Help gather kids & get them ready**
- **Help explain or demo the game**
- **Help campers listen to the person explaining the game**

Games & Activities: How to help



You don't have to lead it all—supporting is a big help & good practice

Playing Games with Campers Younger Than You

Your role:

- Follow the rules & help others follow them
- Be silly, encourage everyone, lose sometimes
- Step in to support during disagreements or hurt feelings, get staff help when needed
- Don't always play 100% strength, notice how to support campers in the game, challenge yourself
- Keep it friendly – notice if you're getting too involved with other youth leaders, refocus on the campers and having fun with them
- **Clean up together**
Everyone grabs some equipment to help
- **Finish strong**
Get equipment back in the bags, ready for next time



→ *Help games be fun,
fair, and inclusive*



You Can't Always be "It"

It's natural to want the "main role" (medic, alien, etc.)

Your role:

- **Put campers first**

Help them have that experience—especially as they're still building confidence

- **Check in with staff**

If you're excited about a special role, we'll help find the right time

- **Lead in everyday ways**

Help run games • Tell a story • Start an activity

- **Make space for others**

Strong leaders include others—and still find ways to shine

✨ *You don't have to be in the main role to be a great leader*

SPF: After the field game, staff gather campers at packs to reapply sunscreen

Younger groups do

- **Book of the Day**
 - A quiet group time, staff/YL read aloud
- **Journal time**
 - Drawing, puzzle solving, coloring, writing

Older groups do **Chill Time**

- Journal time, books available to look at/read, shifting into table games

Your role:

- Help create a calm space
- Join in – draw, solve puzzles, color, listen to books with campers
- At Book of the Day - Take a turn to read in a dramatic way to hold the group's attention
- Support kids who need help settling in

Back to the Schedule: SPF/Sunscreen & Chill Time- Book of the Day & Journals



Daily Schedule:

Afternoon Activities

- A mix of Structured activities like food projects, group games and more Open play with options
- You may hear kids say: “I don’t want to do this”
Help them stay with the group and find a way to engage

Your role:

- Ask Staff leading if you can help them
- Check with staff about starting a game if kids are asking you
- Help explain options and get kids started
- Join in and bring positive energy
- Wear the larger wings and dance with the campers
- Support kids in trying something new



Daily Schedule: Clean up, PM Snack, Closing Circle, & Pick-up

Leave No Trace (LNT) happens after the last activity

- Staff say # of trash pieces to pick up for hand stamp

Handwashing & PM Snack

Closing Circle includes Appreciations, games, & songs

Pick-up – Staff meet parents, YL play with & help get campers to go home, Remind kids to get packs, etc.

Your role:

- Help with clean up, handwashing, and site pack-up
- Remind campers to bring snack & water bottles
- Help the group focus and engage during circle
- Join in—Share appreciations or co-lead a song/game
- Say goodbye to campers by name





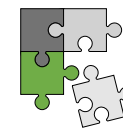
Your First Morning

It's normal for the first morning to feel a little awkward.

- You'll learn as you go. Being open and trying your best goes a long way
- Simple ways to jump in:
Play with campers & Help with activities
- If staff redirect you, it's because help is needed. You can go back to what you were doing later.

Your role:

- Be willing to try
- Ask questions when you're unsure
- Stay flexible as plans shift



Everyone starts somewhere.

You'll find your place

Creating Bonds & Setting Boundaries



Some kids try to connect with physical contact

- Pulling you, holding hands, climbing on you

It's good to set limits—How you feel matters

- If their contact feels like too much, Redirect and offer another way to connect

Your role:

- **Set kind, clear boundaries** - “I don’t want to play that, but I’d love to play ____”
- **Redirect connection** -- sit next to them, play a game together, stay engaged
- **Even if it feels ok to you, please follow our camp safety limits: We do not allow**
 - piggyback rides
 - picking up or spinning campers
 - placing kids where they can’t get down themselves “Try it yourself... keep trying.”
 - kids in staff/YL laps, “Sit right next to me!”

When kids want something different:

- “I hear you. You want something else. Let’s find a way to make this fun.”
- “We’re all doing this right now—what part could you try?”

When kids get hurt:

- “That looked like it hurt—are you okay?”
- “When you fell you did a good job protecting yourself.”
- “Let’s take a breath together. Your bod is already starting to heal.”

When kids argue:

- “Let’s slow down—what happened?”
- “What’s a fair way to solve this?”
- “I know you have a good reason for what you want, let’s talk.”

When kids don’t listen to you:

- Try using humor, explain why we do it, or “Let’s do it together!”
- “I have a YL job here to help and us listening to each other is part of camp. I care about how camp goes for everyone.”

Your role:

- Stay calm and steady, storms pass and things calm down
- Keep language simple and kind
- Help kids learn how to problem-solve, not always fix it for them

Useful phrases at camp





When a camper won't transition -

- “I know you were enjoying that. We’ll come back to it later”
- “Now we’re going together. Want to show me more after?”

When a camper is alone:

- “Want to come play with us?”
 - If they say no: “Okay—You’re welcome to join anytime.”
 - If they seem left out: “Want help joining in?”
- “Let’s find a way for you to be a part of this.”



When kids ask for something not available:

- “I checked—we’re not doing that right now”
- “Let’s find something else you’d enjoy”

It’s okay if they feel disappointed—support and move forward

Your role:

- Acknowledge feelings
- Offer choices when possible
- Get support from staff if needed



You can be kind and still hold the camp plan

Spending Time with other YLs



- It's great to connect with other YLs—especially during breaks
- During camp time, your focus is on the campers and the group

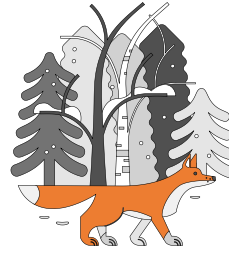
Your role:

- Include campers in what you're doing (avoid being with only YIs for a while)
- Stay aware of the whole group—step in where needed
- Balance fun with responsibility

Connections outside of camp:

- Wait until after your camp session to connect on social media or exchange contact info
- This helps keep clear boundaries and focus during camp

✨ *Campers come first*



Sustainability Do Your Part!

Small actions make a big difference

- **Markers:** Put caps on tightly, pick them all up
→ *Helps them last longer*
- **Game pieces & caps:** Look around & pick them up
→ *Every piece saved matters*
- **Lunastix/Monkey balls:** Find all at the end
→ *Check grass + bushes*
- **Yarn/lanyards/string:** Be thoughtful when using
- **Paper towels:** Encourage shaking hands dry
- **Leave no Trace:** Help us keep the park clean!!

Getting to camp:

- Carpool, bike, or walk when possible

Your role:

- Help us take care of the space & materials
- Help campers build these habits too



Training Program

Youth Leaders are an important part of camp
You'll learn by doing—with support from staff

What to expect:

- First day introduction with Site Directors
- Daily Check-ins with other YLs & Staff
- Summer: Weekly meetings with Directors
- Each session builds your skills and confidence

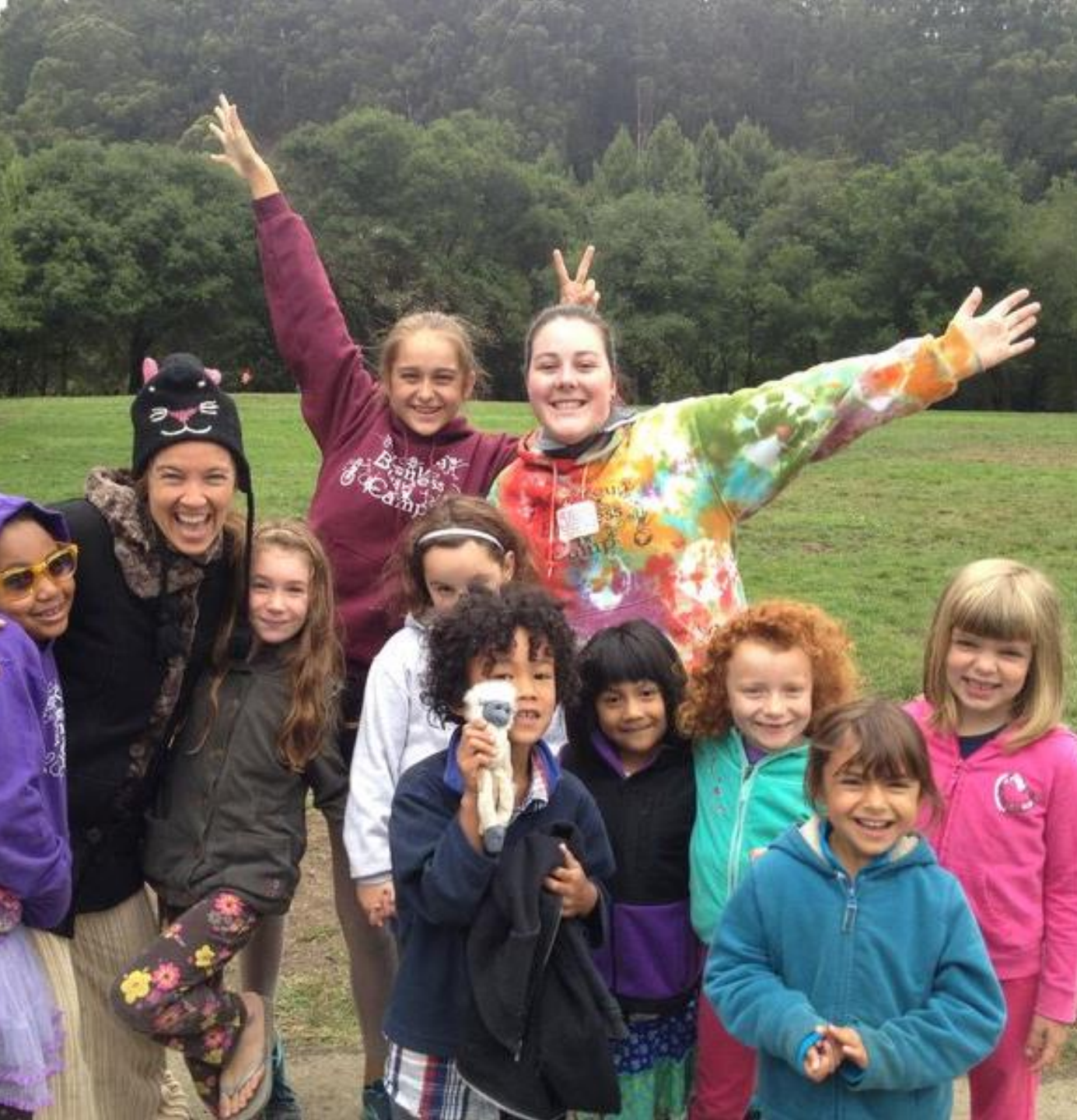
Sometimes it may feel unclear or challenging:

- Decisions are made for the whole group
- Support the plan in the moment
- Ask questions later to learn more

Your role:

- Show up ready to try something new
- Do your best, even when unsure
- Be kind to yourself as you learn, we are all learning
- Ask for help when needed
- Stay engaged with your group





Feedback Glows & Grows

Staff will share feedback to help you grow

Glows (what's going well):

- Effort
- Leadership
- Connection with campers

Grows (areas to build on):

- Ways to improve or try something new

Your role:

- Listen with an open mind
- Ask questions if unsure
- Try out feedback the next day
- Keep trying new ways

Jobs, References & Paying for the Program



***This is a pathway—
You're building toward something***

Many MBC Staff were MBC Youth Leaders

- The more you try new things and grow, the more ready you'll be for staff roles

Why families pay for the program:

- Covers materials, gear, supervision, & training
- You're building real skills over time

Looking ahead:

- Being a YL strengthens school and job applications
- You can ask us for references
- Let us know if you're interested in being staff

Your role:

- Keep showing up and trying your best
- Ask for support and feedback
- Talk with staff about what's hard & what you'd like to be doing with campers

A Special Shout Out to JCs & Older CITs

We're so glad you're here!

- Staff rely on you
- You help model for younger YIs & campers
- You help set the tone for the whole group

You may be asked to:

- Lead when help is needed
- Support group flow and transitions
- Help gather or guide other YIs
- Take initiative during set-up, clean-up, or activities

Your role:

- Be a positive example
- Step into leadership moments
- Ask for help when needed
- Remember - You don't have to be perfect



Leadership grows through practice

Anti-Bias & Inclusion

Gender-Neutral Terms
-to Address a Group -

Y'all Peep-a-doodles
Peeps Humans Dawgs
Beautiful People Folx
Kids/Kiddos Everyone
Friends Homosapiens
Change Makers

Your role: Notice Differences • Include & Respect Everyone
Small actions and how our systems work matter

What that looks like:

- **Notice** → Who's left out? What's happening?
 - Are the same people always talking & getting their way?
 - Is race, gender, or ability a factor?
- **Include** → "Want to play a game together?"
 - "What do you think we could do?"
 - "Camp is different than a playdate, let's figure out how to include other campers."
- **Respect** → Use names and requested pronouns
 - Say "people you live with" or "family" instead of "mom and dad"
 - Help kids see that we have different ways of being & playing

Stretch yourself:

- Try to learn new things about other people
- Make space for other YLs to talk and lead



Honoring ALL Intelligences

There's more than one way to be smart -

Check out 8 ways that have been identified →

At camp:

- Kids shine in different ways
- You'll see strengths that don't show up in school
- Every type of intelligence matters

Your role:

- Notice different strengths
- Encourage all kinds of participation
- Value effort, not just “being good at it”
- Know yourself – what are your strengths and what's harder for you to do now?
- Making space for mistakes, practicing, & growing

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES



Safety at MBC – 1st Aid

If someone is hurt → Tell a staff member first

You might help with:

- Getting band-aids
- Getting ice packs
- Bringing the pack to staff



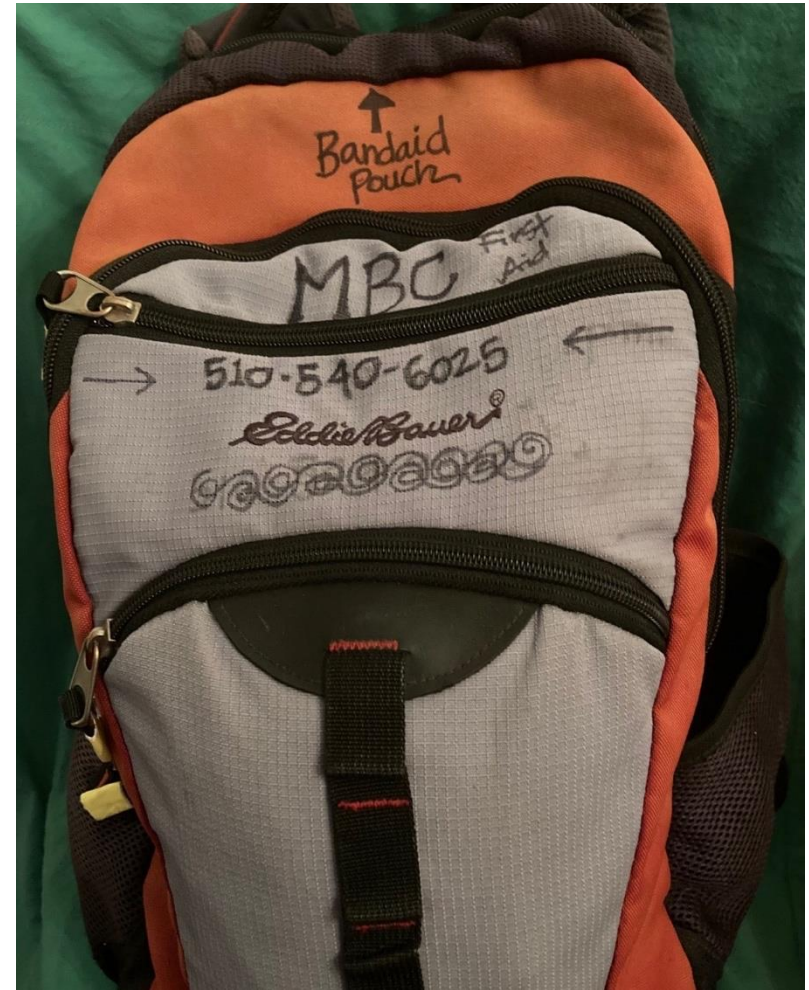
Safety 1st!

Ice packs:

- Each group has a cooler
- Return ice packs after use

Your role:

- Notice when someone needs attention & get help
- Keep Camper info private, share story without name
- Support—don't take over – If other staff/YLs are helping a camper it can be good to step away
- Keep packs zipped – Campers stay out of them



First Aid Packs: Each group has a pack

- Zipper color = your group
(SB = yellow, SME = blue,
MC = green, FS = orange)

Smaller front zipper area of the pack:

Hand sanitizer, Kleenex, Wipes.

Staff will be the main people using these, and may ask you to find.



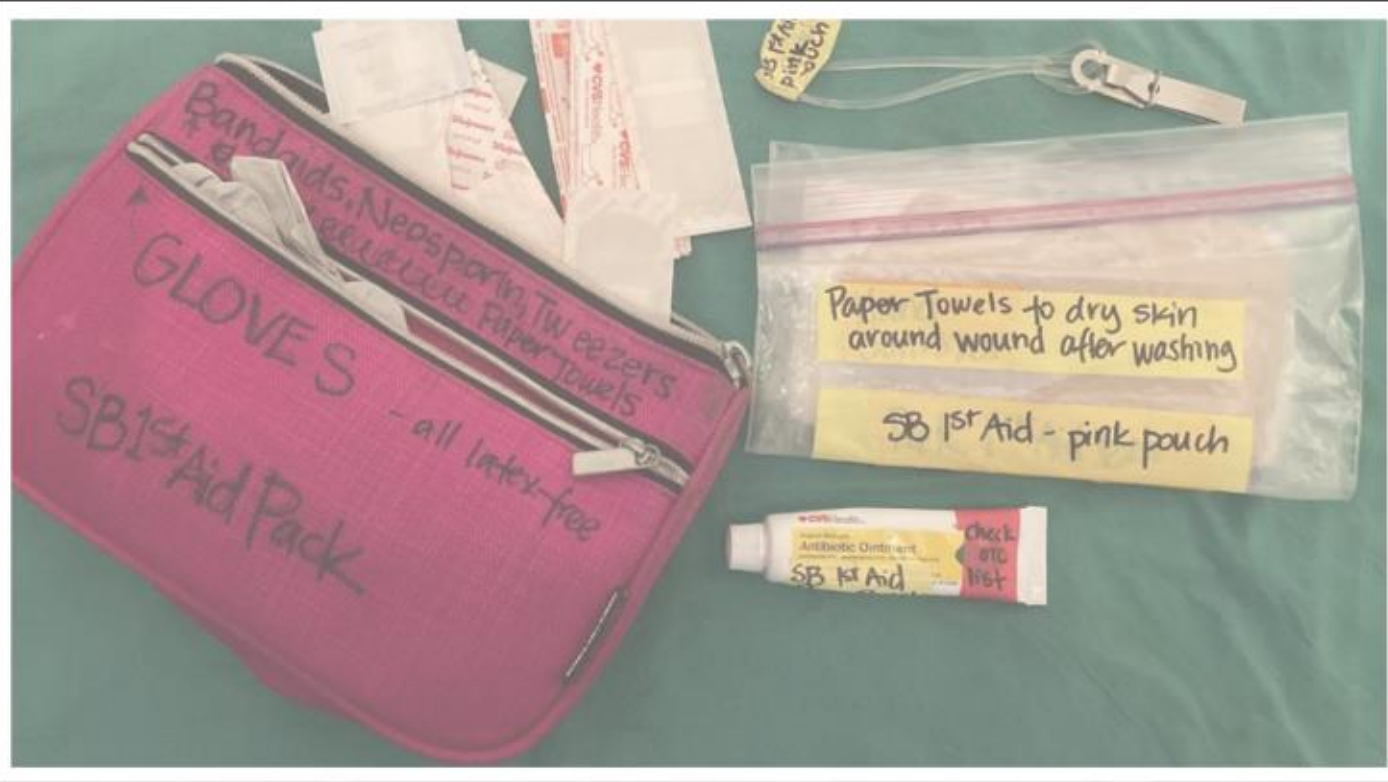
“Bandaids Pouch” Zipper Area: pink Bandaids pouch, larger 1st Aid Lunchbox, Tecnu, & Saline spray

Saline spray - helpful if it's hard to get to soap/water
- if a camper is resistant to washing a wound
- campers can hold the bottle themselves & spray with staff/JC right there.

Tecnu - Staff will Check OTC 1st, for poison oak oil on campers' skin.

Pink Band-aid pouch:

- Band-aids - Use smallest one that makes sense
- Neosporin - Staff check OTC to see if it's ok with parent
- Bag of paper towels to dry area for band-aid to stick
- Tweezers
- Gloves

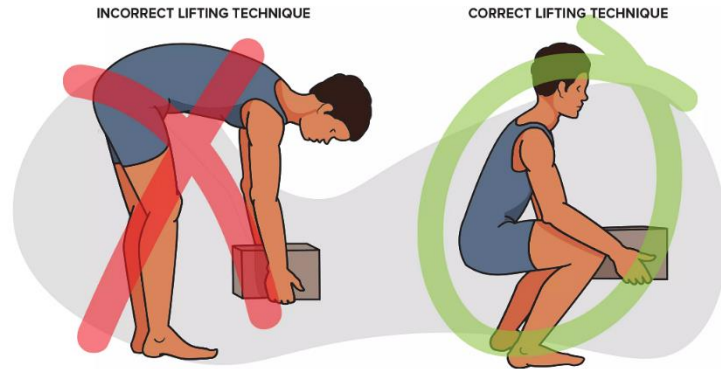


Return Items to Labeled Areas in Pack
→ So everyone on the team can find things quickly if there's an injury.

Important: Staff lead—YLs support

- Ask staff before using 1st Aid
- YL may help get supplies

Taking Care of Backs, Knees, Hips, and Ankles



VERITAS health

Safe lifting- Care for your back

- More trips, carry fewer things
- Use knees and hips, not back
- Look up slightly when carrying things, keeps your back straight

Protect your toes & ankles

- Wear supportive, closed-toe shoes.

Summer – Fields in Tilden Park

- Fields have holes from gophers
- Put flat cones on holes when setting up a field game
- Take care when running or walking near holes
- Don't play at full strength on the field, too many holes you need to also be attending to.





Look out for:

- Poison oak
- Uneven ground and holes
- Bees, wasps, and ticks

What to do:

- Give gophers space, a hoop around, no touching or feeding
- Stay on paths when hiking
- Check for ticks at home

Keep shoes on in Tilden unless on the parachute.

Tilden Park Safety

Poison/Protector Oak –

→ “Leaves of 3, let it be”

→ “If it’s hairy, it’s a berry.

If it’s shiny watch your hiney”

- If you are unsure, don’t touch it, ask someone
- Tell staff if any person or equipment touches it
- “Even if you’re not allergic, we don’t touch it at camp.”
- It protects plants from humans & some animals

Yellowjacket/Wasps-

- Tell staff if you see a few near the ground in one spot, they build nests in holes in the ground
- they are slower in shade and cool weather
- cover food at meals, especially protein



Not Feeling Well (a camper or yourself)

A camper says they don't feel good:

- Stay calm
- Stay with them
- Let staff know

First Encourage:

- Rest
- Water
- Snack
- Bathroom

If it's more serious:

- Tell staff right away
- Stay nearby until help comes

★ **You don't have to fix it**

→ **Notice**

→ **Support &**

→ **Get help**

If YOU don't feel well:

- Tell staff right away
- Don't push through
- Try rest, water, snack, bathroom, things that help you.



What stands out to you?

- ## At MBC, community looks like:

- ## Your role:

-





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Handbook created by Zach Bigelow, Heather Mitchell
and Samantha Swor

Thank you for your kind attention!



Here's to having an amazing camp, this time and every time we are together.