



Youth Leader Handbook

Table of Contents

- Pg 3-5: Welcome, What to Bring Uniform & Wacky Wednesday
Pg 4: [Prep and Pack List](#)
- Pg 7: MBC Values: Fun and Respect
- Pg 8: Social Emotional Aspects at Camp
- Pg 9-32: Daily Schedule-one page link on pg. 9
- Pg 11: Rule of 3
- Pg 15: Tree Climbing
- Pg 19: Toasts (Hydration)
- Pg 21: Songs and Chants, Games & Activities, Nature Connection- *Find links to handbooks in this section*
- Pg 33: Creating Respectful Bonds & Boundaries
- Pg 35: Useful phrases for various camp scenarios
- Pg 37: Spending Time with Other Youth Leaders
- Pg 38: Sustainability- How to Help at Camp
- Pg 39: Training, Feedback, Jobs, References
- Pg 42: JCs & Older CITs-Special Shout Out!
- Pg 43: Anti-Bias & Inclusion
- Pg 44: Honoring All Intelligences
- Pg 45: Safety/First Aid/Illness
- Pg 51: Community





Welcome to Camp!

Welcome to Camp!

Monkey Business Camp is better because of you—our Youth Leaders.

The way you show up—your kindness, energy, and willingness to help—shapes the entire camp experience.

Returning YLs:

You help lead by example and create a strong, welcoming environment from day one.

New YLs:

You bring new perspectives and energy that strengthen our community.

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

We're so glad you will be joining us!

What to bring to camp each day

Bring:

- Lunch + 2 snacks
- Water bottle
- Closed-toe shoes
- MBC shirt (Day 1–2: green)

Good to have:


- Layers (warm → cool)
- Sunscreen / hat
- Book or quiet activity (for break)

Optional:

- Mask (if needed)

Your role:

- Come prepared
- Be ready for a full day

 **Prep the night before—it makes mornings easier**

[PREP AND PACK LIST FOR YOU-ok to print](#)

Be Ready for Camp

Each day:

- Arrive on time (ready to go)
- Stay for the full day
- Eat before camp & bring what you need

Your role:

- Be reliable
- Be ready
- Be part of the team

 **Camp runs better when everyone shows up ready**

MBC Gear & Wacky Wednesday

Why MBC gear matters:

- Helps campers know who to go to
- Helps staff find you quickly
- 👉 **Easy to spot = easier to help**

MBC Gear:

- Wear your MBC shirt each day
- Day 1–2: **Green shirt**
- After that: other color MBC shirts welcome

Wacky Wednesday 🎉

- Dress up with the theme
- Be creative, be yourself, get some items at May orient
- Make sure you can still move & play



Your role:

- Be easy to spot
- Join the fun
- Help kids feel comfortable

🌟 **You help campers feel safe and included**



Monkey Business Camp's Basic Values: **Fun & Respect**

- **Fun:** Camp is about creating fun times for you, the campers, and the staff.
- **Respect:** We balance out the 1st rule of MBC with respect, to include consideration and care for others, the places we host camp, the equipment, and ourselves.
 - As YLs, notice or ask what you can do to help. Stop and listen to staff.
- **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 Aspects

- Most of the time, camp feels good— and **you help create that** through your energy and presence.
- When things get harder, this is where you step into leadership.
- **Youth Leaders:** show empathy, listen, and help kids work through challenges
 - You might help a camper take a break, solve a problem, or follow a limit to keep camp safe.

You're not alone—staff are there to support you.

🌟 This is one of the most important parts of being a Youth Leader.



DAILY SCHEDULE FROM START TO FINISH

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

[Here's a one page sheet of daily schedule if helps to follow along!](#)



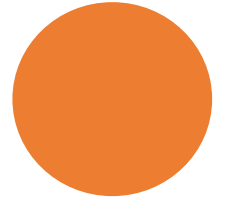
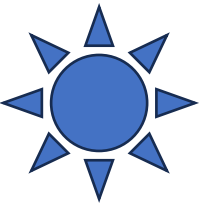
Morning Drop-off & Free play before 1st Activity time

Morning free play is a great time to learn names and start forming bonds, especially at the start of a new session

- This is the start of the day—campers are arriving and settling in.

Your role: help kids feel comfortable and included

- Learn names and help kids connect—welcome each day.
- Start conversations:
 - Do you have any pets?
 - When is your birthday?
 - Have you been to camp before?
- Introduce kids to each other and use their names.
- Help with basics like bathroom trips when needed. We stay in groups of 3 or more (Rule of 3)—this helps keep everyone safe.



Bathrooms and the Rule of 3

- Campers **must ask before going**.
- If one camper needs to go, **see if others can go too**.
 - Pay attention—if someone looks like they might need to go, check in.
- Bathrooms are public → **look inside first** to make sure stalls are empty.

• Wait outside

Rule of 3 (always)

- No one is alone 1:1 with a camper
- Stay in groups of 3 whenever possible

This can look like:

- Two YLs go together
- One YL + 2+ campers
- One staff + one YL (if helping a camper)

If helping inside, **stay within view of others whenever possible**

Bathrooms are **gender neutral** at camp



Daily Schedule: Morning Activity Times

- Activities might include games, art, hiking, or 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, Ex: friendship string, banana tag)



Nature Walks/Park Time

- Groups may walk, explore, or visit different areas of Tilden Park or walk around the block or visit a park near Berkwood Hedge School
- Notice what's around you— birds, turtles, trees, little moments kids get excited about

Your role: be present and engaged

Join in, explore alongside campers, and help where needed

- Support can look like:
 - helping with activities or crafts
 - making sure kids can follow along
 - noticing when someone needs help or a little extra support
- ✨ Being curious, calm, and present helps campers connect more deeply



Walking with the Group

- **Spread out along the group**

One near the front, one in the middle, one near the back

- **Help keep the group together**

Stay aware of spacing and check in as needed

- **At streets/parking lots:**

- Stop at the corner
- Wait for the whole group
- Cross together
- Help kids stay between staff/YLs

- Walking can be a fun time for chants 🎵

- **Help kids connect**

- Invite someone to walk with someone new
- Try: “Find 3 things you have in common”

✨ You help keep the group safe, connected, and having fun





Tree Climbing at Camp

Tilden has lots of trees—some easy to climb, some more challenging

While every tree is different, here are our main guidelines:

1. Three points of contact

(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 arm

3. Stay within staff reach

Don't climb higher than a staff on the ground can reach

Some kids may want to climb higher—and that's okay

→ You can affirm their skills while helping them follow camp safety rules

Kids can always explore bigger climbs outside of camp with their families

🌟 **Your role:** stay nearby, notice what kids are ready for, and help keep climbing safe and fun



Daily Schedule: Cleanup Before Snack

- After activity: clean up → wash hands → snack
- Some areas need a quick tidy, others a full clean (games back in bins, art fully cleaned up)
- **Your role:** Help kids clean, model it, and guide them to something to put away
- Everyone helps before moving on
- 💡 “If 1 person takes 10 minutes, 10 people take 1 minute!”





Handwashing, Snacks, Lunch, & Toasts



- Before eating → handwashing

Your role:

- Get to 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
- Sit near kids

💡 Helpful phrases:

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

🌟 Tips:

- Wash your hands + grab your food too
- Use snack and lunch to connect with campers

Snack and Lunch - How YLs help

Your role:

- Help campers open containers
- Encourage kids to help each other
- Help kids stay seated while eating
- Start conversations (jokes, questions, stories)
- Remind kids to save food for later
- Remind: no sharing food (allergies)
- Help kids pack up when finished-compost items back into their lunches so parents can see what they ate, unless too messy.



Tip:
Sitting and talking with kids is a great way to build connection



Toasts - Staying Hydrated

Toasts happen ~15–20 minutes after eating

Your role:

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

💡 **If a camper doesn't have water:**
“Want help refilling your bottle?”
→ Ask staff if they need to borrow one

💡 **If kids are distracted:**
Repeat the toast + be interested yourself





Daily Schedule: Circle/ Group

Whole group time before the 2nd morning activity

- May include:
games • songs • movement • sharing

Your role:

- Sit with the group and be engaged
- Listen and model attention
- Help kids focus (sit between 2 kids talking)
- 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

💡 **Reminder can share
with campers**
Listening = more time for
the next fun activity

Songs and Chants



Singing brings energy, joy, and helps the group feel connected

- **Before camp:** check out the [songs tip sheet](#) (watch videos + learn a few! Return youth leaders, learn another!)
- **At camp, songs are usually:**
 - Repeat-after-me
 - 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
- 💡 **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 routines stay the same (clean up + pack up)

Near the end of lunch → **toast again** to encourage drinking

After lunch:

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



Field Game: A time to move, get energy out, and play together after lunch

Your role:

- Help set up
- Explain the game
- Join in and play
- Notice how kids play—help keep it inclusive and fun

💡 Support participation:

Keep energy focused on the field game

💬 “A time for playing board games, drawing, or yarn arts is coming up soon!”

Games & Activities Intro

This is a pause in our day to focus on games and activities led by YLs and staff.

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—jump in and give it a try*





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

- **Set up the game** (cones, boundaries, materials)
- **Help gather kids & get them ready**
- **Help explain or demo the game**
- **Join in and model play**
- **Notice what kids need—help keep it fun and inclusive**

💡 *You don't have to lead it all—supporting is a big help*

Games & Activities: How to help

Your role:

- **Listen to the rules**

One person explains—others help keep the group focused

- **Play & support**

Join in, follow the rules, and help keep things fair
Step in if needed to support disagreements or hurt feelings

- **Help end the game smoothly**

Give a heads-up (“5 minutes” / “last round”)
Keep it friendly (ex: “good game,” high fives)

- **Clean up together**

Everyone grabs one item before moving on

- **Finish strong**

Reset materials so the next group is ready

🌟 *Help make games feel fun, fair, and inclusive*



Maximizing your fun & camper fun in games

Your role:

- **Be present**

Put your attention on the kids and what's happening around you, not just the other youth leaders

- **Join in**

Play, help lead, and bring energy to the group

- **Notice what's needed**

Step in to support, include others, or help things run smoothly

- **Be a role model**

Show kindness, flexibility, and respect

- **Keep learning**

Try new things, ask for help, and build confidence over time

🌟 *Start small—show up, try things, and grow over time*





Taking up a Special role at camp

Your role:

- It's natural to want the “main role” (medic, alien, leader, etc.)
- **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 • Support the group
- **Make space for others**
Strong leaders include others—and still find ways to shine



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

Back to the Schedule: Chill Time, & Reset

- After the field game, staff gather campers while they reapply sunscreen (if needed-some kids do not use)
- **Chill time**
A chance to rest, reset, and recharge before the next activity
- Helps campers cool down, relax, and regulate energy after active play

Your role:

- Take care of yourself too—reapply sunscreen and drink water
- Help create a calm, relaxed space
- Model slowing down (sit, read, draw, be present)
- Support kids who need help settling



- **Book of the Day**

A quiet group time where a staff or YL reads aloud

- **Journal time**

Drawing, writing, or simple creative work
A chance to slow down and reflect

- These moments help campers reset, focus, and ease into the rest of the day

Your role:

- Help create a calm, focused space
- Sit with kids and model engagement
- Join in—draw, write, or listen alongside campers
- Support kids who need help getting started

✨ *These quiet moments matter—your presence helps set the tone*



Daily Schedule: Afternoon Activities

- A mix of structured activities like art, food projects, skits, or group games
- Sometimes campers choose between options (field play or table activities)
- Other times, everyone does the same activity together
- 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:

- Help explain options and get kids started
- Join in and bring positive energy
- Support kids in trying something new
- Help the group stay together and included

🌟 *Help kids find their way into the activity*



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

- End-of-day clean up happens after the last activity
- Energy may be lower—this is a time to help the group **finish strong**
- Closing circle often includes appreciations and reflection on the day

Your role:

- Help with clean up and resetting the space
- Double-check campers have their belongings (lunchbox, water bottle, etc.)
- Help keep the group focused and engaged during closing circle
- Join in—share appreciations or help lead a song/game if needed
- Say goodbye to campers and help them feel seen and connected

✦ *How we end the day matters*





Your First Morning

It's normal for the first morning to feel a little awkward—that's okay

- You'll learn as you go—being open and trying your best goes a long way

- When in doubt, ask staff or another experienced YL

- Simple ways to jump in:

- Play with campers
- Help with activities
- Join clean up

- If staff redirect you, it's because help is needed there. You can go back to what you were doing later

Your role:

- Be open and willing to try

- Ask questions when you're unsure

- Jump in and support where needed

- Stay flexible as plans shift

🌟 *Everyone starts somewhere—you'll find your place here*

Creating Respectful Bonds & Setting Boundaries



Building connection is important—and so are clear boundaries

- Campers may test limits (words, bodies, behavior)
Staying calm and consistent helps them feel safe
- Different staff and YLs have different comfort levels
Be clear and respectful about your own boundaries

Your role:

- Be kind, clear, and consistent
- Use simple language (“I’m not okay with that” / “Let’s try this instead”)
- Keep your body safe and respectful (no lap sitting, climbing, etc.)
- Get support from staff when needed
- Help redirect behavior in a positive way

✨ *Kindness and boundaries go together*





Some campers show connection through physical contact (hand holding, climbing, pulling you into play)

- It's okay to set limits—this helps keep everyone safe
- If contact feels like too much, 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)
- Keep your body safe and comfortable
- Follow camp safety limits:
 - No piggyback rides
 - No picking up or spinning campers
 - No placing campers where they can’t get down themselves

🌟 *There are many ways to connect and have fun together*

Useful phrases for camp scenarios

When kids want something different:

- “I hear you—you wanted 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?”
- “Your body did a good job protecting you.”
- “Let’s take a breath together.”

When kids argue:

- “Let’s slow down—what happened?”
- “What’s a fair way to solve this?”
- “We can take turns.”

When kids feel left out:

- “Do you want help joining in?”
- “Let’s find a way for you to be part of this.”

Your role:

- Stay calm and steady
- Keep language simple and kind
- Help kids problem-solve (not just fix it for them)

🌟 *How you speak becomes the tone kids follow*





When a camper wants to stay behind:

- “I know you were enjoying that—we’ll come back to it later”
- “Right now we’re going together—want to show me more after?”

When a camper is alone:

- “Do you want help joining in?”
- “Want to come play with us?”
- If they say no: “Okay—you can have some quiet time. You’re welcome to join anytime.”

When kids ask for something not available:

- “I checked—it’s not available 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
- Stay clear and calm
- Offer choices when possible
- Get support from staff if needed

🌟 *You can be kind and still hold the 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

Your role:

- Include campers in what you're doing (avoid YL-only groups for long periods)
- Stay aware of the 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*



Small actions make a big difference

At camp, you can help by:

- **Markers:** Make sure caps are on tightly
→ *Helps them last longer*
- **Game pieces & lids:** Pick up what you see
→ *Every piece saved matters*
- **Lunastix / Monkey balls:** Gather all at the end
→ *Check grass + bushes*
- **Yarn / lanyards / string:** Be thoughtful when using
- **Paper towels:** Encourage shaking hands dry first

Getting to camp:

- Carpool, bike, or walk when possible

Your role:

- Notice and take small actions
- Help campers build these habits too
- Take care of our shared space

✨ *We take care of our space together*

Sustainability - Doing Our Part!



Training Program

Youth Leaders are an important part of camp

You'll learn by doing—with support from staff

What to expect:

- Orientation + ongoing guidance
- Staff will check in and help you grow
- Each session builds your skills and confidence

Sometimes it may feel unclear or challenging:

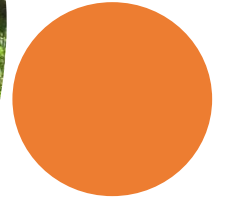
- Decisions are made for the whole group
- Support the plan in the moment
- Ask questions later to learn more

Your role:

- Show up ready to learn
- Try your best, even when unsure
- Ask for help when needed
- Stay engaged with your group



We're all learning together



Feedback - Glows & Grows

Staff will share feedback to support your growth

Glows (what's going well):

- Effort
- Leadership
- Connection with campers

Grows (areas to build):

- Ways to improve or try something new
- Given to help you succeed

Your role:

- Listen with an open mind
- Ask questions if unsure
- Try out feedback the next day
- Keep growing over time

🌟 *We notice your effort and support your growth*





Jobs, References & Paying for the Program

Many staff at MBC started as Youth Leaders

- The more you show up and grow, the more ready you'll be for staff roles

Why families pay for the program:

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

Looking ahead:

- Being a YL strengthens school and job applications
- You can ask us for references
- If you're interested in becoming staff, let us know!

Your role:

- Take your role seriously
- Show growth over time
- Ask for feedback and support
- Let staff know your goals

🌟 *This is a pathway—you're building toward something*

A Special Shout Out to JCs & Older CITs

- We're so glad you're here
- Staff rely on you a bit more
- You help model for younger YIs
- You help set the tone for the whole group

You may be asked to:

- Step in where 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 • Include • Respect**
Small actions matter

What that looks like:

- **Notice** → Who's left out? What's happening?
- **Include** → "Do you want to join?"
- **Respect** →
 - Use names and pronouns
 - Say "everyone" or "family"

Stretch yourself:

- Try new things
- Support all kinds of play

🌟 **Everyone belongs here**

Honoring All Intelligences

There's more than one way to be smart

- Movement (body smart)
- People (people smart)
- Art & creativity
- Nature
- Words & ideas
- And more

👉 *Not just school-style smart*

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"

🌟 **Everyone gets to shine in their own way**

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES



Safety at MBC - First Aid

First Aid Packs: Each group has a red backpack

- Zipper color = your group
(SB = yellow • SME = blue • MC = green • FS = orange)
- Keep packs zipped • Don't let campers access them

If someone is hurt:

👉 Tell a staff member first to decide what needs attention

What you might help with:

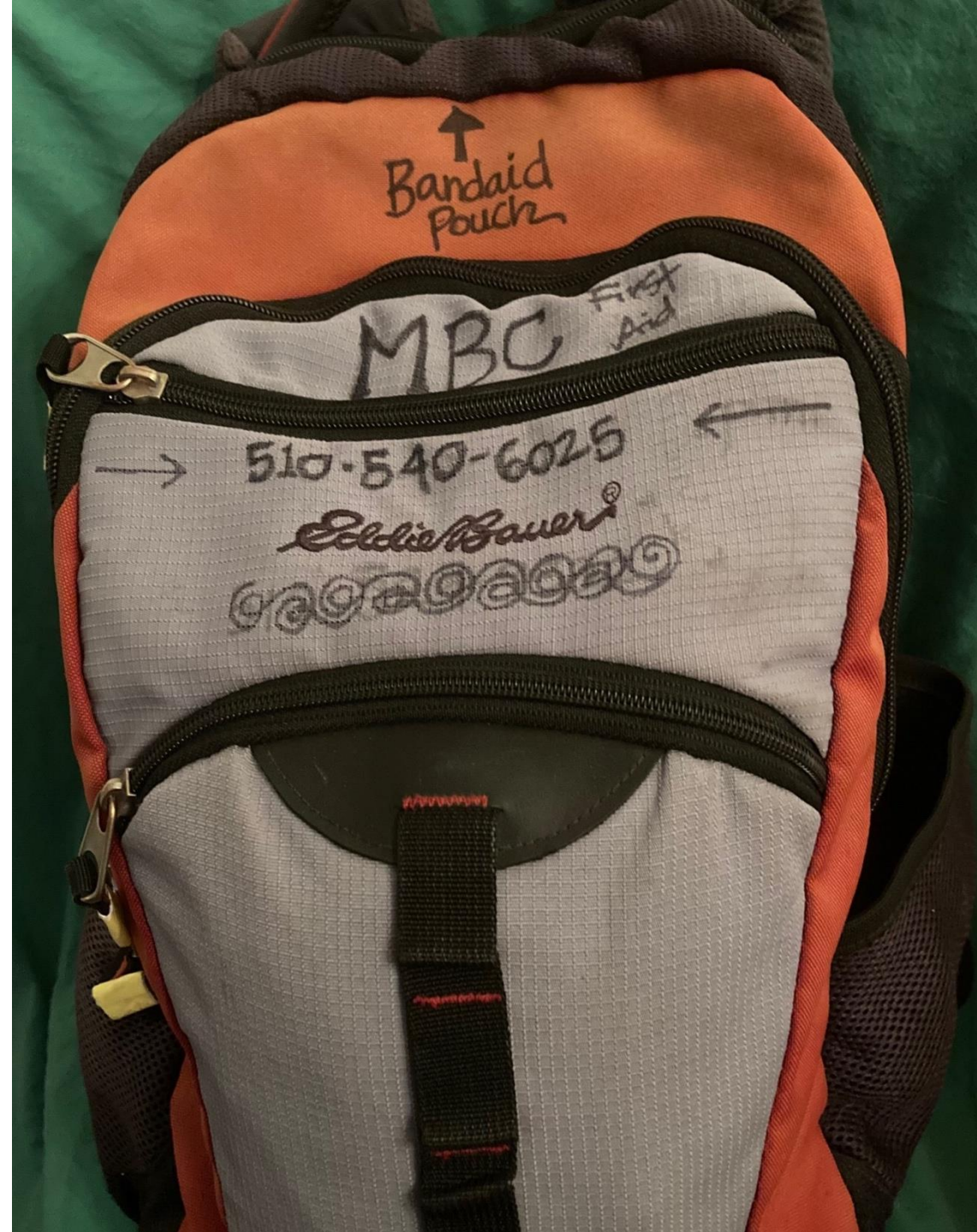
- Getting band-aids
- Getting ice packs
- Bringing the pack to staff

Ice packs:

- Each group has a cooler
- Help return ice packs after use

Your role:

- Notice when something needs attention
 - Get help right away
 - Support—don't take over
- 🌟 **Safety comes first**

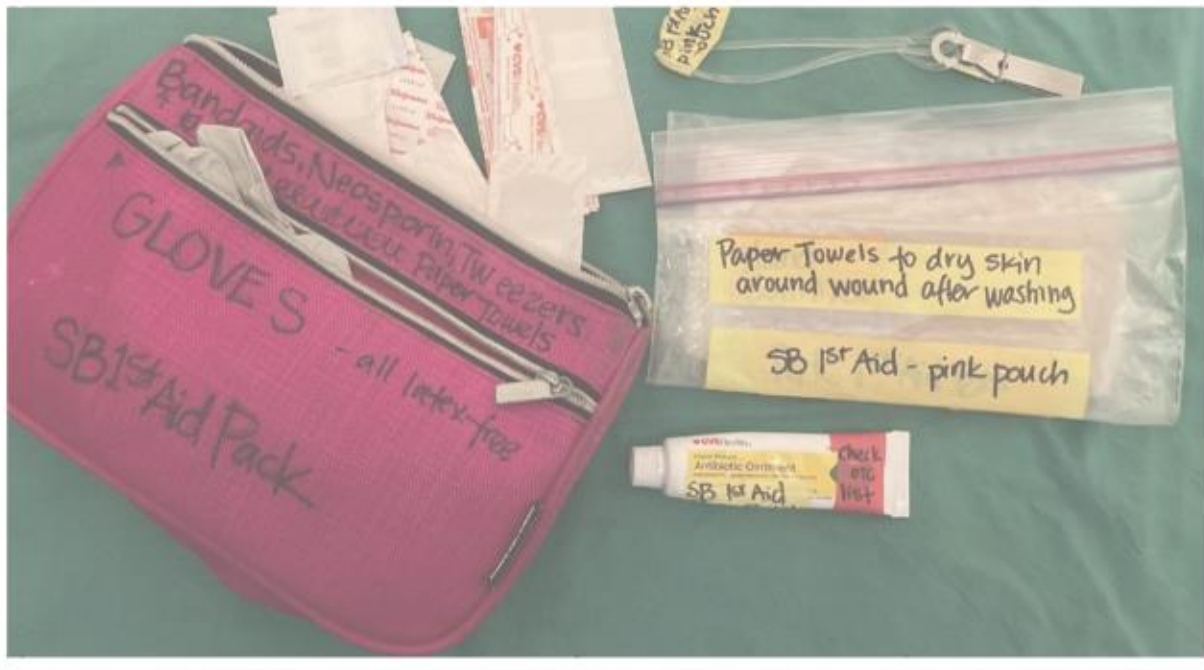




Items staff may ask YLs for help to get out of the **Smaller front zipper area of the pack:** Hand sanitizer, Kleenex, Wipes, or Tecnu. Staff will be the main people using these, but always good to know where it is just in case.



In the Bandaids Pouch: find the small pink pouch with Band-aids, Gloves, and Neosporin & a bottle of Saline wound wash spray. The wound wash is very helpful if it's hard to get to soap & water or if a camper is resistant to washing a cut or scrape. Campers can hold the bottle themselves (stay right there) and it usually doesn't hurt if they spray it themselves.



Band-aid pouch contents:

- Band-aids-use smallest one that makes sense.
- Gloves
- Neosporin if it's ok with parent (staff check OTC)
- Saline spray

Important:

👉 **Staff lead—Ys support**

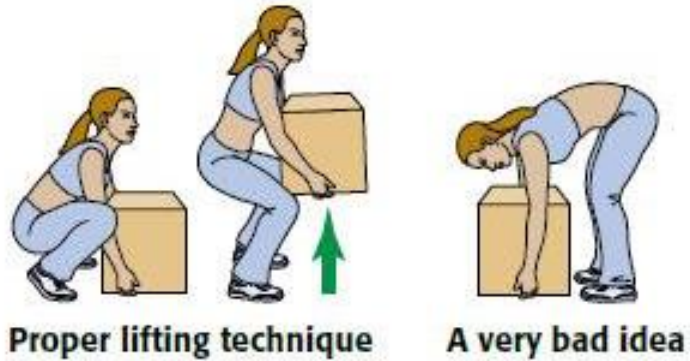
- Ask staff before using items
- You may help get supplies

Return Items to Labeled Spaces in Pack:
This is so everyone on the team can find things quickly when there is an injury.

Confidentiality:

- Keep camper info private
- Share situations, not names

Taking Care of Backs, Knees, Hips, and Ankles



Protect your ankles

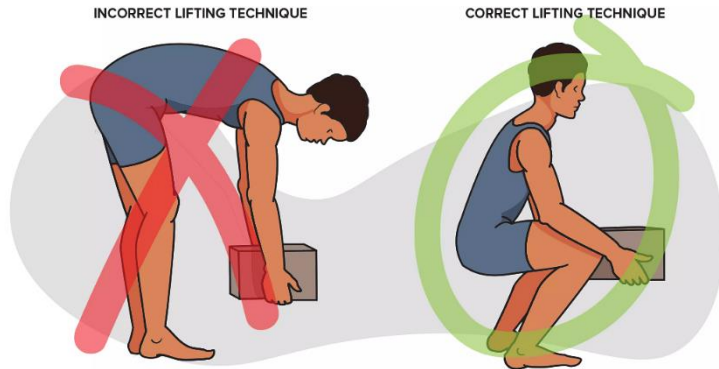
- Wear supportive shoes. It makes a big difference

Summer – Fields in Tilden Park

- Fields have lots of holes from gophers
- Place flat cones over holes when you are setting up a field game and take care when running or walking near these holes.

Safe lifting- Care for your back

- More trips, fewer things
- Use knees and hips, not back





Tilden Park Safety



Know the main risks:

- Poison oak
- Uneven ground / holes
- Insects (bees, ticks)

What to do:

- Stay on paths when possible
- Watch where you step
- Give animals/insects space

Poison oak:

- 👉 *“Leaves of 3, let it be”*
- 👉 Don't touch—even if unsure
- 👉 Tell staff if exposed

Other Safety Items to be aware of:

- **Yellowjacket/Wasps**- Tell staff if you see a lot on the ground in one area, as they build nests there; they are slower in shade; cover food at meals.

Your role:

- Notice hazards
- Help others stay safe
- Ask staff when unsure

🌟 Awareness = safety

Not Feeling Well (You or a Camper)

Start here:

- Stay calm
- Stay with them
- Let staff know

Try simple support:

- Rest
- Water
- Snack
- Bathroom

👉 *Small things often help*

If it's more serious:

- Tell staff right away
- Stay nearby until help comes

Your role:

- Notice
- Stay calm
- Get help

🌟 **You don't have to fix it—
just support and get help**

If YOU don't feel well:

- Tell staff right away
- Don't push through
- Try hydration, things that help you.





Thank you for
your kind
attention!

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

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