



2024 PARENT HANDBOOK

Everything you need to know about sending your child to YMCA Camp Mason





23 Birch Ridge Road Hardwick, NJ 07825

908-362-8217

information@campmason.org www.campmason.org

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Summer Camp Director: Anna Bilton anna@campmason.org

Summer Camp Registrar: Shani Kately shani@campmason.org

One-week sessions for campers grades 2-9:

Starter A: June 23– June 29

Starter B: June 30– July 6

Starter C: July 21– July 27

Starter D: July 28– August 3

Starter E: August 4– August 10

Ideal for the 1st Time Camper

The CIT Program is for campers In 10th & 11th grade. There is an application and interview involved before program admittance:

CIT A: June 23 – July 20

CIT B: July 21 – August 17

OUR MOST POPULAR SESSIONS

Two-week sessions for campers grades 2-9

Session 1: June 23 – July 6

Session 2: July 7 – July 20

Session 3: July 21 – August 3

Session 4: August 4 – August 17

NOTES: • Final balance due May 1st or 2 weeks before the start of your chosen session if you registered after May 1. All paperwork (medical, etc...) is due, at minimum, 2 weeks in advance of your chosen session.

ADDITIONAL POTENTIAL FEES:

YMCA Membership: \$30 (required if not YMCA member)

Trading Post (Camp Store): \$35 per week recommended

Stayover Weekend: \$180 per weekend

Horseback Trail Rides: \$40 per ride

Welcome to Camp Bag: \$35 per welcome bag

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Welcome to YMCA Camp Mason!

YMCA Camp Mason has welcomed youth and families of all nationalities, backgrounds, and faiths since 1900. We offer a variety of programs focused on building character and developing leadership skills through a shared community camping experience. The mission-based programs of YMCA Camp Mason afford personal growth opportunities to people of all ages.

Located on 460 acres adjoining the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, our extensive, well-maintained facility blends with nearly 125 years of tradition to provide an exceptional camping experience. Generations of campers from all walks of life have spent their summers at Camp Mason.



OUR MISSION

“Through the transforming experience of outdoor camping – rich in bonding friendships, physical activity, and fun – YMCA Camp Mason will lead youth, families, and community to an awareness of our core traditions: environmental stewardship, spirituality, and respect for our fellow man.”



OUR HISTORY

Camp Mason’s story begins in 1900 when the Trenton/Mercer County YMCA organized its first season of residential summer camp at Camp Washington, near Washington’s Crossing, NJ. Several years later the camp moved to Marshall Island (also known as Eagle Island) in the Delaware River and changed its name to Camp James J. Wilson. A flood inundated the island in 1955 and the camp was moved to its current location in Hardwick, NJ. Another name change accompanied the move: Camp Wilson became Central New Jersey YMCA Camps. Today we are YMCA Camp Ralph S. Mason.

OUR GOALS

- To provide a safe and healthy environment where children can learn and grow
- To foster an appreciation of the natural world
- To ensure kids have access to experiences to help them realize their potential

OUR COMMUNITY

YMCA Camp Mason believes in diversity and inclusiveness. This means that we are open to all, regardless of ability, age, background, race, faith, gender identity or sexual orientation. Our diversity makes each of us stronger and is consistent with our core values of caring, honesty, respect, responsibility and inclusiveness.

STAFF

YMCA Camp Mason employs more than 100 seasonal staff during the summer. Many of our staff are college students, former campers or have a background in child development. Camp Mason is proud to employ counselors from all over the globe. All staff participate in intensive training prior to working with children. Leadership staff participate in an additional week of training. In addition to counselors, the camp hires teaching specialists for activities such as boating, sports, the arts, and adventure programs. Support staff work in the office, kitchen and at maintenance. Camp Mason is committed to creating a safe environment for our campers. We adhere to the stringent hiring procedures and policies of the Y of the USA and the American Camp Association (ACA). All staff members are subject to state and federal criminal and sexual offender background checks, as well as personal and professional reference checks.



FACILITIES, MEALS AND LODGING

Camp Mason features extensive program facilities including an arts pavilion, playing fields, a lake for boating and canoeing, sports courts, a skateboard park, large swimming pool, high and low ropes courses, archery and riflery ranges, and miles of hiking trails.

Cabins are simple and comfortable. Each duplex building is home to two cabin groups. Junior cabins hold 8 campers and two staff members. Senior cabins hold 10 campers and two staff members. Each cabin has electricity and full dormitory-style bathrooms. Campers and staff sleep in sturdy bunk beds in the main cabin area.

Campers enjoy meals together in our dining hall. Food is served by experienced food service staff. The kitchen is equipped to deliver healthy and balanced meals in sufficient quantities year round. Please inform the Camp Director and complete all camper forms if your camper has any dietary restrictions or needs.



DAILY SCHEDULE

Campers follow a daily schedule that is designed to provide both structure for skills-based learning and free-time activity choices that promote independence and self direction. Campers begin their day at 7:30AM. Breakfast is served shortly thereafter. Cabin cleanup follows breakfast, after which is morning cabin activity, a time when each cabin group participates in an activity they've planned together. There's a daily camper choice period next. Lunch is served at midday and is followed by siesta, a rest period. Campers often spend this time reading, playing cards, or writing home. After siesta campers will have time either in the pool area with their village or participate in a larger, village-wide activity. Skill-based activity periods take place in the afternoon. Campers select their activities each week for a total of 6-10 activity options over the course of 2 weeks. Dinner follows a free time activity block.

Evenings consist of an all-camp, village, or age-group activity, such as a campfire, talent show, or carnival. Evening activities are followed by cabin chat, an opportunity for individual cabin groups to reflect on the day's events and discuss a topic of interest. Cabin chats are directed by the counselors. Bedtime varies for age groups, but ranges from 9-10pm.

Weekend schedules are slightly different. Each Saturday has a themed all-camp activity that consists of mixed cabin and group events. Past themes have included Popstars, Jurassic Park, Olympics, and Outer Space. Sunday is 'Sunday Funday', a relaxed day that includes special events, tournaments, and games. The entire camp also gathers for community on Sunday which often includes readings from inspirational sources, music or a skit, and a brief message based on one of the four core values.



CAMP ACTIVITIES

Some of our common activity offerings are listed below. Others are added, depending on the talents and abilities of our staff.

Land Sports: Basketball, Disc Golf, Flag Football, Mountain Biking, Street Hockey, Kickball, Skateboarding, Soccer, Ultimate Frisbee, Volleyball

Target Sports: Archery, Riflery

Aquatics: Swimming, Canoeing, Kayaking, Boating, Fishing

Creative Arts: Crafts, Candlemaking, Painting, Drawing, Video, Jewelry Making, Music, Dance, Drama, Tie Dye

Adventure: Climbing Wall, High/Low Ropes, Rock Climbing

There are also a wide variety of creative and unique activities that are created each summer that make camp extra special, and fun!

TRAIL RIDES

Sign your camper up for a horseback trail ride adventure! Your camper will be transported to our partner, Fairview Lakes for a fun and informative experience. Each trail ride lasts approximately an hour, is led by skilled and trained instructors and includes a brief training session to ensure your child is set up for success. Each ride is only \$40. Sign up through your camp account.

ARRIVAL AT CAMP

You will be notified of your dropoff time around 2 weeks in advance of camp. When you arrive you'll be checked in by a member of our leadership team. They will check your paperwork is complete, payments are made in full and show you where to drop off any medications. Next, you'll drive directly to your child's cabin and move them in. You'll meet their counselor/s and then it's time to say farewell.



Please exit the camp promptly so we can prepare for the next arrival block and start the fun of the afternoon!

DEPARTURE FROM CAMP

We will be sad to see your camper go! When you arrive to pick up your camper/s our team will show you where to park, be prepared to walk from our furthest parking lot. There will be luggage collection drive thru available. Head to the dining hall to sign out your camper/s - **you will need to show photo ID**, and then collect any medications and luggage. The camp store will be open to make any last purchases or request a refund of unspent balances. Any unclaimed funds after September 30 are added to our campership fund.



STAY-OVER WEEKENDS

There are stayover weekends between sessions 1 & 2 and 3 & 4. Four-week campers may add a stayover for an additional fee which covers the weekend's associated costs. Parents may also choose to take their children away from camp over these weekends. The camper registration contains a space to sign up for these weekends. The camp will assume your child is not staying- over if you do not register for a stayover weekend.

Parents may visit their stayover campers on the following dates: **July 7 & August 4**

Please contact the office to inform us you would like to visit your child. Your child may be picked up between 9:30AM and 10:30AM and must be returned to camp by 3:00PM.

Please be sure to check-in at the office before departing and upon arriving back at camp. Note that Sunday is opening day for many families. There will be lines and traffic starting around 1PM and lasting until 3PM that day. Plan your return accordingly.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

The following documents must be completed in order for us to admit your child into camp. We unfortunately cannot make any exceptions to this policy. All forms are found in your online account and can be completed directly on our website.

- Camper Medical Form with copy of Insurance Card: Making a copy of both sides of your insurance card before you get here will significantly shorten your wait on opening day.
- **Medications:** If your child will be taking any medications while at camp, all medications **MUST be packaged in blister packs and MUST contain the exact doses your child will be administered at camp.** This is necessary for all medications including over the counter drugs.
- Camper Information Form: This confidential document will be shared with your child's counselor before they arrive at camp. Our staff members use this information to ensure that your child has a safe, meaningful, and enjoyable camping experience. It is our primary means of documenting and communicating your expectations regarding your child's experience at camp, so it is important that you complete and return this document before camp starts.
- Program Waiver & Payment Acknowledgement. This form enables your child to participate in camp activities and programs.



These forms must be filled out online prior to your arrival at camp. The medical form is required by law in the state of New Jersey. The YMCA does not offer accident or medical insurance to individual campers.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

YMCA Camp Mason strives to provide the camp experience to all children, regardless of financial circumstances. Our fund is limited though and financial assistance is available on a first-come, first-served basis until the fund is depleted. You can find an online financial assistance form on our website. Please complete this form **BEFORE** registering for camp.

MEDICAL COSTS

The camp retains Premier Health Associates of Blairstown, NJ as a medical consultant and uses Newton Medical Center (in Newton, NJ) or Pocono Medical Center (in East Stroudsburg, PA) for emergency treatment. The camp will attempt to contact parents prior to making any necessary appointments for off-site treatment. Premier Health Associates will bill you directly for co-payments. The camp will bill you for any uncovered medical expenses. A detailed invoice will be provided for the purpose of claim processing. Emergency trips to a dentist, optician or orthodontist will be handled in the same manner as a visit to our doctor.

We recommend that you review your family's health insurance rules and activate any applicable vacation or travel stipulations prior to

sending your child to camp. Make sure you know who your primary physician is and how to reach them. If your HMO/ insurance company insists that your child be seen by a specific doctor you will need to make the appointment and take your child yourself.



HEALTH SERVICES

Our Health Services staff is on-site at all times and are based in our Health Center. The camp doctor's office is ten minutes away. In case of emergency, we use Newton/Pocono Medical Centers, each twenty minutes from camp.

We are required by law to screen all campers for contagious illnesses or conditions. The health services team will check your child's Health Form and ask you for any necessary clarification. This is a good opportunity for you to meet the health care staff and discuss special concerns or situations. Remember to bring your child's medication with you on opening day. Do not pack it in their bags. All medication must be turned in to the nurses upon arrival. This includes prescriptions, over the counter medications, and vitamins. **All prescription medication must be packaged in blister packs with the exact number of doses for your child's time at camp.** Your child's name and the proper administration directions must be on the label. Your child's health form must include instructions for administering the necessary medications.



Our medical staff can administer over-the-counter products with a parent's permission and instructions. Medications for your child not following these requirements cannot be accepted or administered. It's appropriate to call the nurses there if you have any questions about your child's health care or medication. It's helpful for us to know about any mental health concerns your child may have and we ask you to include them on the health form. We do have mental health support staff on site throughout the summer should a camper need someone to talk to, although this is not a formal service.

HOMESICKNESS

Homesickness is a normal and healthy response to being away from home; parents of younger children and first time campers may expect it. Our staff members are well-trained in techniques that help campers develop coping skills for overcoming the challenges of separation from home and family. These skills often lead to more confidence and independence, a key outcome of the camping experience. If the first letter from your child is a little down-hearted, don't be alarmed. Send a reassuring response encouraging them to stick with it. Resist the temptation to include phrases that would lead them to believe you other family members (including pets) are missing them or that your child is missing out on important things at home.

If the problem becomes serious we'll give you a call. We want to involve you in developing useful strategies for your child's success. Keep your letters positive and supportive when you write letting your child know how proud you are that they are facing this challenge. Allow some time for the homesickness to subside. Feel free to call the director at any time if you still have concerns. Putting children on the phone with parents can seriously compound homesickness issues and can make the situation more difficult; however our staff can assist you with any questions regarding your child's experience.

TELEPHONE POLICY



Here at Camp Mason we work to develop strong, independent young people who can function on their own as part of our community. Our staff members are ready to assist campers in dealing successfully with any challenges that arise during their stay with us. Cell phone usage by campers is counter-productive to this process. It bypasses the development of confidence in a community setting, removes the opportunity to resolve conflicts, and undermines our ability to provide guidance within a given situation. **Please – don't send your child to camp with a cell phone.** Give them the chance to succeed on their own. If you must get an important message to your camper, we will pass it along.

Official Cell Phone Policy

Cell phone use by campers is prohibited. We will confiscate any cell phone in a camper's possession and return it at the end of the session. We cannot guarantee the security of ANY electronic device brought to camp. Thank you for helping us to provide your child with the opportunity to be a confident, independent member of our community.

COMMUNICATING WITH CAMP

The camp office is open in the summer from 9AM-5PM and we also have personnel available to take calls between 6:30-8PM Monday - Friday. If you reach our voicemail system when you call, it means we are out and about on camp caring for your children, please leave a message and we will return your call as soon as we can. While your messages are important to us, please know that any emails or voicemails, unless an emergency, may not be returned until the following day since camp gets quite busy! If you have a true emergency, our voicemail system will give you directions.

VISITING YOUR CAMPER

We do not have visitation times during any of our programs or sessions. Campers staying for a stayover weekend may have visitors only on the Sunday of the stayover weekend. You must contact the office in advance if you plan on visiting your child (ren) on a stayover weekend.



COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CAMPER

Letters: As a parent it's nice to get letters from your camper. Your chances of receiving mail will be increased if you pack pre-addressed, stamped envelopes or postcards. Send mail to your camper at:

YMCA Camp Mason
23 Birch Ridge Rd.
Hardwick, NJ 07825
ATTN: Your Camper, Village, Cabin

Packages: Campers enjoy receiving packages from home. All packages are opened in the presence of a staff member. Please ensure that no food or drink is mailed to protect those with allergies and to keep critters out of our cabins. Packages should be addressed in the same way as letters.

Please Note: There is no food permitted in cabins. Many campers have allergies to common ingredients in food. Any food in the cabins will be confiscated and returned at the end of the session.

Email: One-way email communication is provided for parents to send messages to their camper(s). This service is free of charge and all emails received prior to 12pm will be delivered in 24-48 hours.

To send an email to your camper, please use the address: camperemail@campmason.org and put your camper's name, village and cabin in the subject line.

Photos: Camp Mason endeavors to provide parents with a good sense of what is happening at camp. To assist in this goal we will post photos to a secure website as often as possible (not necessarily daily). Please understand that we have upwards of 300 children a day on camp so there is no way for every camper to be present in photos. We thank you for your patience.

Two Week Camp Packing List

Please use the following checklist to be sure your campers have everything they need when they come to camp. Remember to pack enough for the entire session. We recommend packing in a duffel bag as luggage is generally stored under the bunks. *If coming for only one week, simply reduce the number of items needed, but still use the checklist and pack all essentials.*

CLOTHING

- ☐ Underwear (14)
- ☐ Socks (14)
- ☐ Shorts (6-8)
- ☐ Jeans/Long Pants (3-6)
- ☐ Sweatshirts/Fleece (3-4)
- ☐ Light Jacket
- ☐ Pajamas (or preferred sleepwear)
- ☐ Raincoat
- ☐ Swimsuits (2-3)
- ☐ Bathrobe (if desired)
- ☐ Hat/Cap
- ☐ Something slightly dressy (for dance night)

FOOTWEAR

- ☐ Sneakers/Athletic Shoes (2)
- ☐ Light boots/hiking shoe (1)
- ☐ Sandals/Water Shoe (1)

BEDDING

- ☐ Sleeping Bag (required)
- ☐ Twin sheets (optional)
- ☐ Blanket (optional)
- ☐ Pillow with pillowcase

TOILETRIES

- ☐ Soap
- ☐ Shampoo/Conditioner
- ☐ Deodorant
- ☐ Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- ☐ Razors/Shaving Cream
- ☐ Bath Towels (2-3)
- ☐ Beach Towels (2)
- ☐ Washcloth
- ☐ Shower Caddy (or similar)
- ☐ Laundry Bag

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- ☐ Flashlight (w/ extra batteries)
- ☐ Insect Repellent (non aerosol)
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Water Bottle
- ☐ Letter writing supplies
- ☐ Riding Boots (if participating in trail rides– 1/4" heel preferred)

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- ☐ Fun costume to wear
- ☐ Camera (not internet enabled)
- ☐ Books for reading
- ☐ Notebook for journaling



**PLEASE
DO NOT
BRING:**

Personal Electronics of any type (cell phones, iPods & music players, iPads or tablet, smart watches, game players, VR headsets, video recorders...

Weapons of any sort

Matches or lighters

Alcohol

Tobacco

Any Vaporizers or vape products

Marijuana or any illegal substance

Any food or drink (including candy and gum)

Expensive items

Please label ALL clothing, luggage and personal items. Camp will not be responsible for any lost, stolen or unlabeled items. All items left at camp after departure will be kept for 2 weeks and then donated to local charities. Please be sure to check the lost and found area when you come to pick up your camper.

CABIN-MATE REQUESTS

The camp makes every attempt to honor cabin-mate requests, but cannot guarantee placement in every instance.

Cabin-mate requests must be mutual which means each camper must request the other. Cabin-mate requests are capped at a maximum of 3 requests. Make your requests early for the best consideration. The camp reserves the right to change village and cabin assignments at any time, up to and including opening day of any camp session.



LAUNDRY

There are no provisions for doing laundry at camp, so please be sure to send a sufficient supply of clothing. Campers staying for stay-over weekend will have their laundry done over that weekend, so they will need a bit more than a two week supply of clothes (see packing list in this document). Please make sure that all clothes are well labeled, and that the camper has a sturdy, cloth laundry bag with their name written on the outside.

TRADING POST

Items available in the Trading Post include snacks, clothing, stamps, postcards, small toys, batteries, stationary, minor necessities, toiletries and personal items. We suggest depositing \$70 in your child's account for each two weeks they're at camp. You may spend any remaining money in your camper's account on check out day or you may choose to donate any remaining dollars to our scholarship fund. Any unclaimed balances after September 30 will be automatically donated.

REFUNDS AND CANCELLATIONS

Registration deposits and any payments made are refundable by written request through March 1st. After March 1, any fees paid are not refundable except in the case of verified academic or medical restriction. Please notify the camp if you must cancel your registration. No refunds are available for children sent home from camp for behavioral reasons. Campers leaving early due to parental decisions are not eligible for refund or prorated tuition.

OTHER IMPORTANT POLICIES



Drugs, alcohol, e-cigarettes/vape pens and weapons are not permitted on camp premises at any time. Staff and campers found in possession of drugs, alcohol, weapons or other substances are subject to disciplinary and legal action. Camp reserves the right to search individual property if the health and safety of its participants is in question.

Use of personal sports equipment by campers is prohibited unless asked in advance and cleared by the Directors. Camp Mason will not be responsible for the storage of personal equipment. Only approved drivers will be permitted to transport campers. Should campers need to be transported for any reason use of a Camp Mason vehicle is required. Campers are not permitted to bring personal pets or animals of any kind to camp without approval of the camp director.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS TO CAMP MASON

From Interstate 80 West-Bound (NYC & New Jersey)

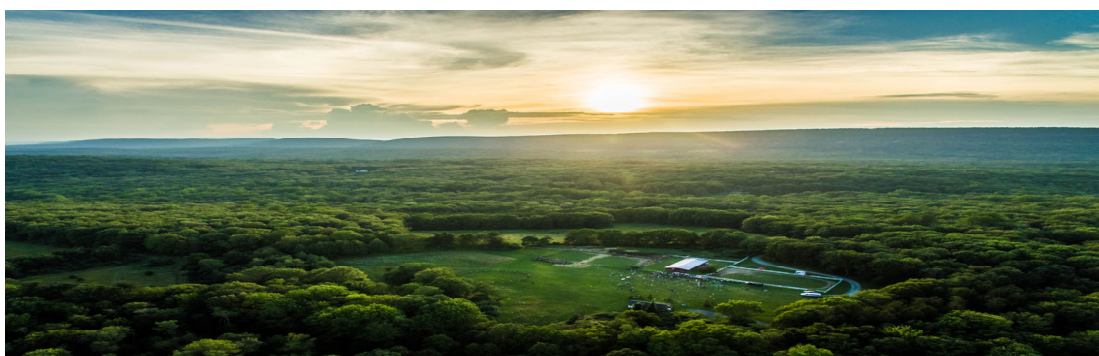
- Take Exit 12: Blairstown/Hope. Turn north off ramp on 521 towards Blairstown. Follow 521 to junction of Rt. 94. Turn left.
- Proceed 1/4 mile to Sunoco and Valero gas stations on left. Bear right (opposite gas stations) and turn right onto Main Street
- Follow "From Blairstown" directions below.

From Interstate 80 East-Bound (Pennsylvania and Delaware Water Gap)

- Take Exit 4C: Blairstown/Rte 94N, follow Rte. 94N to Blairstown (approx. 7 miles).
- Pass ACME grocery store and go through one traffic light. At Valero Gas Station (on right) turn left onto Main Street. - Follow "From Blairstown" directions below

From Blairstown

- At the old mill with stone arches (waterfalls and park behind) bear left and go up short, steep hill.
- At top of hill, bear left at split, and proceed towards Millbrook, on Millbrook Rd. (multi-camp signs on corner)
- Stay on Millbrook Rd. for about 3 miles. Pass Princeton Blairstown Center on right, take a right on Birch Ridge Rd. (next road). pass one house. Camp Mason sign and driveway are on the left. Proceed to the end of driveway to the office.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are the most important things I can do to ensure my child's success at camp?

a. Send your child to camp **WITHOUT** a cell phone.

Having a cell phone doesn't make camp easier - it makes it harder! Asking and searching for phones strains the relationship between staff and campers, and adds anxiety to the cabin experience during the crucial first week of camp. Give your child the gift of their own potential... make sure they leave their cell phone at home!

b. **DON'T** send food in care packages.

Due to the increasing frequency and severity of allergies as well as our inability to guarantee that incoming foods are 100% allergen free we prohibit food in the cabins. Any food will need to be taken and stored until it can be returned upon departure from camp.

2. What are the most important things I can do to make registering for camp an easy process?

a. Get your paperwork in early.

This is the simplest way to make opening day an enjoyable experience for the entire family. Getting your paperwork in early means check-in will be quick and you can spend more time making sure your child is settled in their cabin. Read this handbook, complete the paperwork, and send it in well ahead of time, and opening day will be a breeze!

3. How do I apply for financial assistance?

a. Applying is easy! Just go to our website, click Overnight or Day Camp tab and look for the button that says Financial Assistance. Don't be shy about asking for help if you need it. Making sure every kid gets to go to camp is at the heart of our mission.

YEAR ROUND AT CAMP MASON

Each year Camp Mason hosts approximately 800 campers in its summer resident camping program, 100+ a day in our day camp, as well as over 10,000 at our Outdoor Center. With 394 beds available in winterized cabins and lodges, the Mason Outdoor Center welcomes participants from over 120 different schools, groups and organizations that use our facility for environmental education, outdoor education, recreation, retreats, and group getaways throughout the year. If you are interested in coming to Camp Mason for one of our other programs, contact us at 908-362-8217, email information@campmason.org and check out our events at campmason.org/events.



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