

# How to Pick an ADHD/LD Camp for Your Child

From the editors of *ADDitude*

There are hundreds of special-needs camps in the U.S. How do you find the right one for *your* child? Start by looking at [additudemag.com/directory.asp](http://additudemag.com/directory.asp) and [campparents.org/spclneeds.php](http://campparents.org/spclneeds.php). Once you've narrowed your list—based on location, cost, and focus (social skills, academic reinforcement, travel and adventure)—pose these questions to the director of each camp. The answers you get will help you make your final selection.

## 1. Is the camp accredited?

The American Camp Association ([campparents.org](http://campparents.org)) is the authority in camp accreditation. It sets the standards (including those for counselor qualifications and for dispensing medication) for both mainstream and special-needs camps.

## 2. What is the ratio of counselors to campers?

Mainstream camps usually have one counselor for every six to 10 campers; the ratio at special-needs camps is often closer to 1:3. The higher the ratio, the more opportunities counselors have to work with kids on an individual basis.

## 3. Does the staff have special training?

Senior staff should include psychologists, social workers, and teachers, and all should have expertise outside the program working with ADHD and LD kids. Junior staff members should have shown an interest in special needs (for example, by studying psychology or social work). The camp should train counselors in working with ADHD/LD kids, including how to handle social or behavioral problems that may arise.

## 4. How are meds supervised?

Each accredited camp has its own system for managing and dispensing meds. In general, camps should have at least one registered nurse on staff, in addition to an auxiliary medical staff composed of nursing assistants, local doctors, psychologists, and so on.

## 5. What does a typical day look like?

ADHD/LD camps mix traditional camp activities, such as hiking, archery, and crafts, with social skills training. A typical day might also include some academic instruction, to make sure kids hold on to the gains they made over the last school year. Camps should be able to provide a detailed sample schedule, which you can review with your child.

## 6. How do you handle homesickness?

Some camps make phones or e-mail available to campers. Others have found that a no-communication policy helps kids adjust better to being away from home. Find out what procedure will be followed if your child runs into a problem.

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