



Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

Thank you for choosing The Buffalo Zoo Summer Camp for your camper this summer! The following information goes over what to expect at Zoo camp this summer to help prepare you and your camper for a great summer full of exploring, creating and learning.

Zoo Camp is exciting, fun, and full of new experiences but can sometimes be loud and stimulating for campers. In order to make sure all campers will have the best experience at camp, we have included the following in the camp design:

- Training for staff to recognize and calm a camper who has become anxious or overstimulated.
- Staff who can take campers to calming locations
- Sensory toys
- Noise reduction headphones
- Weighted stuffed animals
- Basic communication boards for emotions and needs
- The following pre-camp information with what to expect at camp each day.

Please provide us with the tools necessary to give your child the best possible experience at Zoo Camp by giving additional information about special considerations you may have listed on camp registration. This may include additional information on

- Allergies
- Medical Conditions
- Accessibility concerns
- Behavioral, psychological, or emotional conditions
- Other special considerations

The information you provide will be shared with Zoo Camp counselors unless you request otherwise. Details will not be shared with other Zoo Camp participants without your permission.

Sharing extra information, such as the following, with us can be immensely helpful and make the camp experience positive for everyone involved.

- Signs to watch for
- Common Triggers
- Methods for preventing or helping with situations that may arise
- Details of any Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or Behavior Plans used with your child at school.

At any point, your camper can let a counselor know if they need a break from the activity or need tools to aid their participation.

Some children do better with pictures, so in the following pages we've included written and picture descriptions to help you and your camper(s) prepare for their wonderful experience in Summer Zoo Camp. Note – the activities listed (active games, tours, lesson, art time) may not happen in the order listed.

Thank you so much for choosing Buffalo Zoo camp and we look forward to a great summer!

*Robina Nagel*

Onsight Program Specialist/Summer Camp Director

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## **Morning Activities**

- **Lesson Time:** This is when campers learn more about our topic for the day and get to see animal items including skulls, feathers, and furs. This is primarily a sitting activity where campers are encouraged to participate as they would in a school classroom setting – sitting in one spot and respecting the teachers who are giving the lesson, as well as raising their hands to contribute information or ask questions about the topic being discussed. (30 minutes)
- **Daily Exhibit Tour:** Led by one of our expert volunteer educators, campers visit various exhibits and learn about how the animals relate to the daily theme. Campers are expected to stay with their camp group. Listening and participation in the form of questions is strongly encouraged. (30 minutes)
- **Active Games:** Each day there will be active games relating to biological themes. Examples include bat and moth where students play a modified tag game in order to learn about how echolocation works. Campers are encouraged to take breaks if they need, and games will be modified to group ability and weather. (30 minutes)
- **Snack Time:** Each day we encourage campers to bring a nut-free snack. (15 minutes)
- **Morning Free Time:** Free time can mean any number of various activities – active/running games on a Zoo lawn, touring to exhibits not included on the regular camp schedule that week, revisiting favorite exhibits, participating in events that are part of the public visitor schedule. Counselors often ask groups which activity they would prefer to do during this time. (30 minutes)

### **After Lunch Activities**

- **Craft:** We provide creative art time at Zoo Camp every day. Crafts are either related to science themes that we are learning about, or connect culturally to the area we are studying. Examples include making chromatography butterflies and Aboriginal Australian dot art. Campers are given supplies and assistance to make whatever piece of art they would like. We encourage creativity and allow campers to personalize their art as they see fit. While in art time, campers must be patient and respectful of others and the materials provided. (45 minutes)
- **STEAM Activities:** Each day at camp includes at least one activity based on the combination of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math themes. Some examples include cleaning up a simulated oil spill, navigating an orienteering course, or engineering a wildlife bridge from popsicle sticks and paper cups. (15-45 minutes depending on activity)
- **Ambassador Animal Visit:** Each day at camp, campers will get an up-close meet with two off-exhibit animals from the education department. Students must remain seated and calm and are encouraged to ask questions. Many days, campers will have an opportunity to touch one of these animals if they are comfortable. (30 minutes)
- **Afternoon Free Time** (30 minutes)

**What will Zoo camp look like?**



We are going to travel to Zoo Camp!

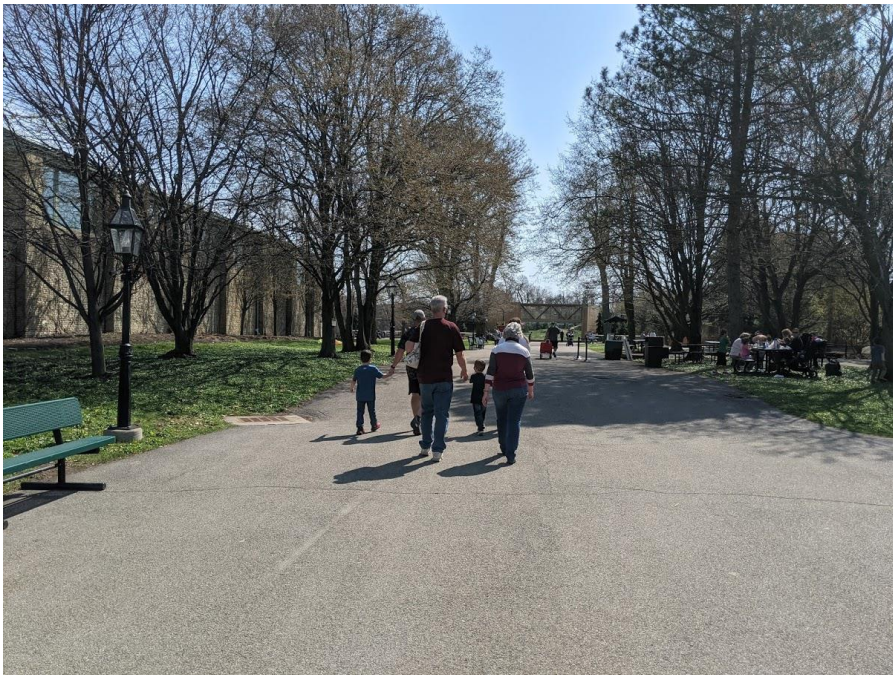


Miss Bina and Miss Rosemary will sign me in and introduce me to a counselor who I will wait with.





I will wait with my counselor until a group of campers has arrived. While waiting, my counselor will help us all get to know each other!



Once my group is ready, my camp counselors will lead me to our Zoo classroom where I can leave my stuff and we will start our first activity, getting to know each other!

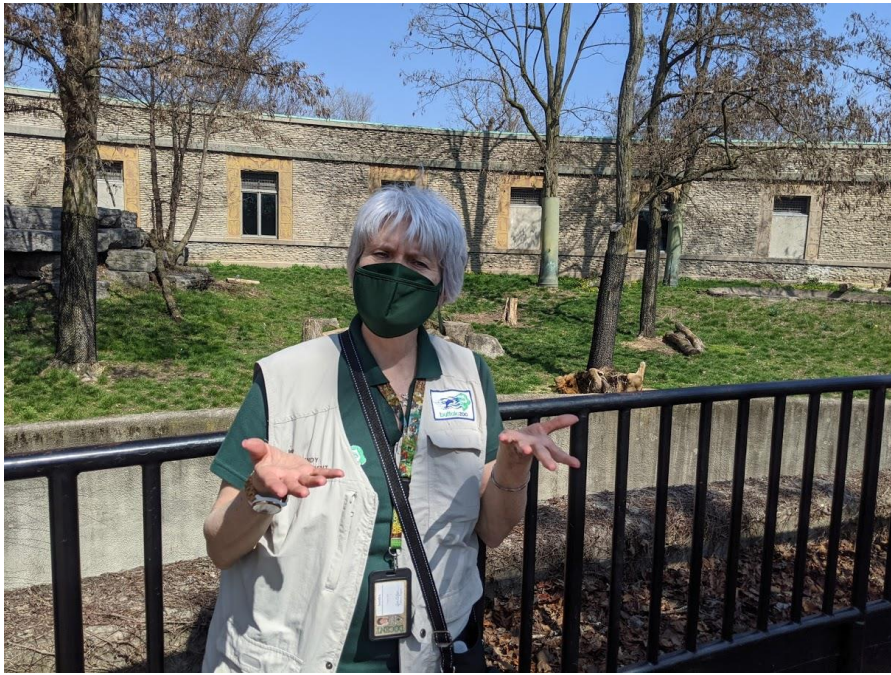




In Zoo Camp, I will do so many fun activities, like getting to know new friends and seeing animals!



During the day, my camp friends and I will play active games outside.



Our expert docent helper will give us a tour of the Zoo and talk to us about the zoo animals.



We will have snack time.





During lesson time, we will learn about animals and where they live. They may also show us furs and bones of animals.



We will eat lunch in our classroom with our group and docent helper.



We will also have time to create our own artwork.



We will have fun challenges to complete and games that we play.



A docent will show us animals that we can see up close.



We often will get the chance to touch an animal (if we are comfortable). We have to make sure we are gentle!





When we are in the Zoo, there may be a lot of other guests and it may be busy or loud.



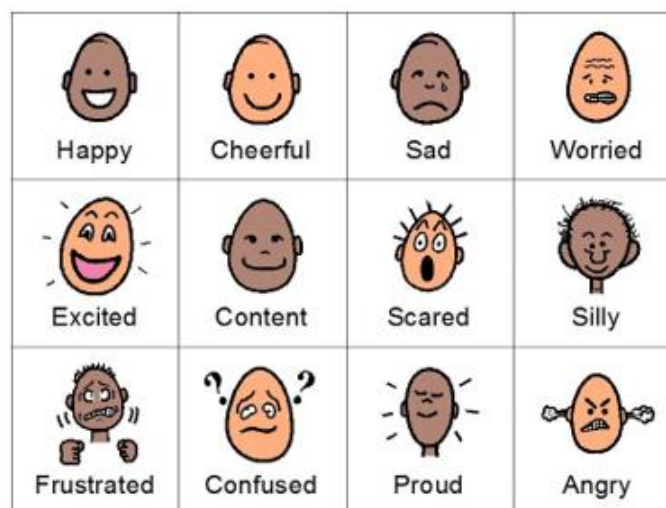
If it gets too loud for me or I feel stressed, I can tell my camp counselor or docent helper and they can help me.



## I need something...



## I am feeling...



If I want, my counselor will have these cards that I can use to show what I need or how I am feeling.



At the end of the camp day, my camp counselor will lead us back to the front of the zoo where we will wait to be picked up by our adults.



We are so excited to meet you and start camp!!!