



Camping *with* THE KIDDIES

Preparation is key Kathy Buckworth

For some, *roughing it* is when the campsite's electrical outlet isn't in the most optimal location to charge the laptop. For others, it's *pitching a tent in the middle of a piece of Canadian wilderness*. Either way, the addition of young children makes any camping experience one that requires *extra planning*.

Thankfully, we've done most of the planning for you and have come up with this guide—packed full of tips and checklists that will help you meet the Scout motto of “be prepared.”

STAKE YOUR TERRITORY!

Choosing the right campground for your family's needs is an important decision you'll have to make. What really makes a campground kid-friendly? It depends on the age of your kids and what you consider to be bare essentials for being comfortable with your children.

National and provincial parks are well maintained; however, they may lack the basic amenities many parents feel are necessary such as showers, toilets, and electrical plug-ins—though this is not always the case. If you're thinking of a more comfortable camping

experience, you might consider choosing a private campground.

Barb Fine, whose children are two and five, had a terrific family camping experience in a public campground. “The place we went had a great playground area, food concessions, beaches, and even kids programming.” Tick off your necessary amenities in the sidebar on page 56 to determine what kind of camping experience you want.

Also, ask around once you've got a few places in mind. Some campgrounds are notorious for hosting rowdy, barely-legal partiers—not exactly good company for your youngsters.

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT!

Kathryn Howell, of familypaddlingadventures.com, has

camped with her kids since they were three months old and knows the challenges involved in keeping little hands and feet clean, safe, and busy.

She advises, “When camping with a young child it's important to make sure that you have a nice and cozy tent setup, with lots of blankets, foam pads to sleep on or wrestle on, and make sure that they have lots of extra clothes and stuff to change into.”

Thinking about what each child will need to feel comfortable (blankets, toys, food, et cetera) is a good place to start—keeping in mind space restrictions in your backpacks or car. If you can manage, take along a portable playpen—helpful for both naptime and bedtime as well as keeping baby clean and safe while you set up camp.

For a checklist of other essential items, check the sidebar on page 55. ➔



▶ DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT THESE ESSENTIALS

- extra clothes
- rain gear
- first aid kit
- flashlight
- batteries
- plastic garbage bags
- duct tape
- sunscreen
- sun hats
- baby wipes
- natural bug repellent
- games
- little backpacks to keep organized
- crafts, beads, colouring pages, and crayons
- stories for campfire storytime



“Don’t just hope for sunshine, prepare for the possibility of nasty weather.”

PREPARE FOR PRECIPITATION

- » Choose a flat, high spot to pitch your tent.
- » Lay down a waterproof tarp before you set up your tent, and make sure the edges are folded under to prevent water from pooling.
- » Keep your stuff away from the inside tent walls.
- » Tie up a waterproof tarp on a slope over your tent.
- » Tie up a giant waterproof tarp over your cooking area and picnic table.

KEEP IT CLEAN!

Part of the fun of camping is getting a bit dirty, but babies and toddlers are sensitive to germs so keeping their belongings clean is important. “It is easy to sterilize bottles,” says Howell, “just boil up a pot of water and place cleaned bottles into it.” For washing regular dishes, don’t use the lake as a big sink. Bring along a washing bin or a large pot that can double for cooking and cleaning.

If you’ve got a babe still in diapers, you might opt to leave the reusables back at home for convenience sake, unless you have the kind with disposable liners. Don’t forget to pack swim diapers so even your tiniest little one can enjoy the water.

you need to be prepared, because the closest hospital or drugstore can be miles away. There are basics that should be kept on hand, according to these experienced campers.

Howell has learned which first aid items are essential when camping with young kids. She suggests keeping your first aid kit in a separate, waterproof nylon bag, and making sure the kit is handy at all times (see page 37 for a complete list for putting together your first aid kit).

Alison Kramer, of Burlington, Ontario, agrees on the importance of a first aid kit, but also advises that many parks have medical services for emergencies. (You can inquire about these when you register for your site.) “I used to do a lot of back country camping when I didn’t have kids, but now that I do, I prefer to be closer to the modern world, just in case,” she says.

just hope for sunshine; prepare for the possibility of nasty weather and ensure that no matter what the forecast, your family has a fun camping trip. See the sidebar for tips on keeping dry—even in a tent!

A little rain is manageable, but a thunderstorm can be scary to small children, not to mention dangerous. If you encounter a mean storm, consider taking the family to the nearest mall, theatre, or family restaurant. After a few hours the storm should pass, and you and your little ones—dry and happy—can pick up where they left off, chasing squirrels and collecting rocks.

Camping with small children is bound to be a memorable experience. By planning ahead and being prepared, you can ensure those memories are pleasant ones. **b**

SAFETY FIRST!

It only takes a minute for a child to wander down to an unsupervised beach, overgrown pathway, or open fire pit, so knowing which adult is in charge of which child at all times is extremely important.

Even with careful monitoring, when a child injures themselves at a campsite,

IT’S RAINING!

Despite your best efforts, some things just can’t be planned. The weather is one of those things. Don’t

KATHY BUCKWORTH’s latest book *Shut Up and Eat: Tales of Chicken, Children and Chardonnay* (Key Porter Books, 2010) is available at bookstores everywhere. Visit kathybuckworth.com or read her blog at blackberrydiaries.net.

WHAT DO YOU NEED IN A CAMPGROUND?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> toilets | <input type="checkbox"/> playground | <input type="checkbox"/> cable hook-ups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> showers | <input type="checkbox"/> bicycle rentals | <input type="checkbox"/> wireless Internet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> firewood for sale | <input type="checkbox"/> games room | <input type="checkbox"/> kids' activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> electrical plug-ins | <input type="checkbox"/> pool | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> laundry facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> concession | |

