



Camp Frequently Asked Questions

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If, after reading this document, any of your questions were not answered or you have more questions, please email the Camp Directors at:

Camp KangaZoo/Teen Camp: Shelby Cady scady@stlzoo.org

Camp Joey: Kelsey Navin navin@stlzoo.org

Specialty Camp: Kim Hoormann hoormann@stlzoo.org

General Camp Questions

Is your camp inclusive?

We know that children of all abilities benefit when they play and learn together, and it is our goal that whenever possible they do so in our programs. Inclusion facilitators are available for intermittent support at our camp programs. However, if 1:1 support is required at school or in a public setting like the Zoo, where elopement risks are increased, and a 1:5 ratio is not sufficient for support and safety, we ask that families provide an aide with a verified background check.

Please see the [Inclusion section](#) to learn more. If you have specific questions that are not addressed, please reach out to zooinclusion@stlzoo.org

What is the difference between Camp Joey, Camp KangaZoo, Teen Camp, and Specialty Camp?

Camp Joey is for our youngest campers, who may be new to a camp experience. Children must be at least five years of age, and entering K-1st grade in the upcoming fall. Camp Joey takes place Monday through Friday, with the exception of one mini-week that is four days in length.

Camp KangaZoo is our camp experience for children entering 2nd-6th grade. Camp KangaZoo is typically Monday through Thursday, culminating in an evening event on the final night of Zoo Camp. There is an exception of one mini-week that is three days in length.

Teen Camp is a step up from KangaZoo for older campers, also Monday through Thursday, but includes a fun overnight experience at the Zoo on the last night of camp! It is for children entering 7-9th grades.

Specialty Camps are topic specific and are a great way for campers to explore targeted interests. The topics vary and different titles are appropriate for different age ranges, but in general specialty camps are offered for 3rd-12th grades. Specialty Camp groups are smaller than the other camps, and are offered Monday through Thursday. There is no Thursday evening or overnight experience with any Specialty Camp title.

What are the exact times, dates and prices?

Please visit the Camp Programs webpage (available prior to registration opening) and click on the link for the Camp session (Joey, KangaZoo, Teen, or Specialty) you are most interested in. The dates, prices, and times will be listed there for each Camp.

How many sessions of Camp can I register my child(ren) for?

To accommodate as many children as possible, we have a firm maximum of one Camp KangaZoo, Teen Camp or Camp Joey per child, one session of each title of Specialty Camp within their grade level, if applicable. The Camp Joey, KangaZoo, and Teen Camp sessions are exactly the same week-to-week.

How do I register for camp?

Please review complete registration information [here](#) . Online registration will open for Zoo Friends members on Wednesday, February 12, 2025 at 10 a.m. and for the General Public on Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 1 p.m. Registration is online only.

For 2025! - NEW Queueing Software

Due to high program demand, we will be utilizing queueing software to help manage high volume online registration. The goal is to reduce customer wait times and increase the number of customers served. Once you have entered the queue, do *not* refresh your browser, or you will lose your spot in the registration line.

What if camp sells out?

Our programs are in high demand, and we do sell out quickly. We highly recommend registering for Camp as soon as possible (see dates above). If Camp is sold out, please register for the wait list and we will contact you if a spot opens up.

What if my child doesn't want to or can't attend each day of camp?

If your child cannot or does not want to attend part of a camp session (e.g. the Teen Camp overnight or the Specialty Camp Junior Marine Biology squid dissection), we understand. At no point is a camper ever required or forced to participate in camp activities. We also understand if daily conflicts come up. Please reach out if there are concerns, or if your camper will not attend camp on any given day.

The Camp registration fee is the same regardless of whether your camper attends all aspects or not.

What is the CampDoc parent portal?

As your child's first week of camp approaches, the parent or legal guardian will receive an email invitation from CampDoc to complete their camper's profile. This information provided to the Zoo will allow the camp staff to keep your child safe and best meet their needs. See the [CampDoc section](#) of FAQs for more information.

Is financial assistance available?

Yes! Financial scholarships are available for under-resourced families. The scholarship application will be available on our website when registration opens in February. Camp spaces are set aside for campers who are awarded scholarships, so if you see that a session is sold out, that does NOT apply to scholarships. We accept scholarship applications until April 1st and then review and award them.

How can I help provide financial assistance to campers?

If you are interested in making a gift of any amount, to help a camper enjoy a Zoo camp this summer, please contact Amy Zentgraf at (314) 646-4569 or azentgraf@stlzoo.org

LOGISTICS

Where is Camp located at the Zoo?

KangaZoo and Teen Camp: Indoor activities occur in classrooms on the lower level of the Primate House and at the Exploration Outpost (located on the lower level of the Orthwein Animal Nutrition Center).

Camp Joey Indoor activities occur in the Bayer Education Gallery in the lower level of The Living World.

Specialty Camps: Indoor activities occur in classrooms in The Living World. In some cases, there are off Zoo campus activities (example: Senior Marine Biologist has a field trip component for water quality assessment at an off-site location).

All camps have outdoor activities that take place throughout the Zoo grounds, as well as visiting animal habitats, both indoors and out.

How do I pick up my campers if I have children at multiple Camps with the same pick up time, like Camp Joey or Teen Camp?

Camp KangaZoo and Teen Camp pick up on the south side of the Zoo on Wells Drive, while Camp Joey and Specialty Camps pick up on the north side on Government Drive. You may need to stop at both locations. Information on our staggered pick-up times and procedures will be provided in the Camp information packet, which you will receive after you register for Camp.

Our pick-up procedures are designed so that the parent can designate who will pick up their child. You will provide a list of “trusted contacts” who are authorized to pick up your child in the CampDoc parent portal.

It is the Zoo Policy that children under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an adult at all times on Zoo Grounds. Parents of children under the age of 14 need to escort your child to and from Camp. You will be asked to sign your child “in” and “out” before and after programs. The Zoo is not responsible for your camper until they are checked in by authorized Camp staff per our safety procedures. If your child is over the age of 14, please add them to the Trusted Contacts section of CampDoc so they may check themselves in and out. NOTE: Camp staff will verify the birthdate and if the camper is not over 14, they will not be allowed to check themselves in and out, no matter what.

What should my camper bring to camp?

Each day, campers need to bring a lunch and a refillable water bottle. We strongly suggest hats and/or cooling towels if need be. Campers need to wear comfortable walking shoes and apply sunscreen prior to drop off each day. Any Camp specific needs and/or policies will be shared in the parent packet, which you will receive closer to the start of Camp.

What is the cell phone policy for Campers?

We prefer that Campers leave cell phones at home. Camp is not responsible for lost cell phones. There are occasions in which cell phone use is not permitted and campers will be informed prior to that time. If the Camper chooses not to follow the counselor’s guidelines, the phone may be confiscated, and returned at the end of the day. This also applies to “smart” watches with texting/calling capabilities.

Attending with a friend/camp buddy

Can I attend Camp with my child?

Camp programs are designed for campers to attend without their grown-ups. However, if your child has unique needs or requires one-on-one assistance, you may be allowed to come as your child's aide. Please refer to our [Inclusion FAQs](#) for more information and details about this procedure and legal requirements you will need to meet.

Can my child attend Camp with a friend?

Yes. Both camper's families should plan to register early and around the same time to have the best chance of getting into the same Camp session.

How do I request a buddy for Camp Joey and Camp KangaZoo?

We have a system for you to request that buddies in the same session of Camp be placed in the same **camper group**. Buddies should be no more than one year apart in age or grade, and requests can be made during the online registration process. To request a buddy, please indicate that in the CampDoc parent portal. Please also have the buddy write your child's name on his/her/their portal as well. Please keep in mind that buddies are placed into groups based on the *younger* buddy's birth date.

Why don't Teen Camp and Specialty Camp have a buddy program?

Since those camps have smaller age ranges and fewer campers than Camp KangaZoo, those campers are naturally all together. As long as the campers in those sessions are registered for the same week and title, they will be in a group together.

Can my child request more than one buddy?

Please do not request more than one buddy. If you designate more than one buddy, we will consider the first child listed as the buddy. Please do not try to take advantage of the buddy system by creating buddy chains (A with B, B with C, C with D, D with A, etc.)

Camper Safety

How can I be sure my child will be safe?

Your child's safety is our top priority at Camp. Camp staff and volunteers also undergo an annual background check, as well as a thorough interview process and reference check prior to being hired. Staff and volunteers are all trained on our "Youth Protection Code of Conduct" and we adhere to the "rule of three," which ensures that a counselor is *never* alone with a camper.

All of the Educators are certified in First Aid, CPR and Epi-pen administration. Most are also trained in AED use and oxygen administration. We have medics from St. Louis Children's Hospital at the Zoo most days to help with medical emergencies, as well as our Zoo Security team who are always available.

Additionally, if your camper experiences a medical condition (i.e. Epilepsy/seizures, diabetes, heart condition, etc.) that may impact participation in any way, we invite you to access our Inclusion Services for possible extra and coordinated support. Please view the [Inclusion Services](#) section for details and/or contact Zoo Inclusion staff at zooinclusion@stlzoo.org. You will also have the option to upload emergency care documents into the CampDoc parent portal (e.g. seizure recovery plans, diabetes plans, etc.)

You are our partner in camper safety! By notifying us of any allergies, unique needs, behaviors to expect, medical conditions, concerns, etc., you help us keep your child safe.

If your child engages in unsafe behaviors (leaving or running away from the group, not following safety guidelines, attempting to harm other campers, staff, or property, etc.) and is not responding to interventions, they may be asked to leave for their own safety, and for the safety of others. We are happy to have them return to Camp the next summer or recommend a Zoo program that may be a better fit for them.

How do I ensure my camper is safely dropped off and picked up at Camp?

When you complete your camper's CampDoc profile, you will list all individuals who are authorized to pick up your camper in the "Trusted Contact" section. (*Please note: You will also need to list yourself when completing that section!*) If a person is NOT listed as a Trusted Contact for your child, we will verify the person's ID (e.g. driver's license) and contact you at the number(s) provided to verify that your camper can be picked up by that person. If we cannot reach you to verify, we will not release the camper to that person.

In the morning at drop off, please drop your camper off with the authorized Camp staff ONLY. You will receive more information in your parent packet about those procedures. *The Zoo is not responsible for your camper until they are checked in by authorized Camp staff per our safety procedures.*

What are the sick/illness protocols?

Please do not send your child to Camp sick! The Zoo relies on guidance from the St. Louis City and County Health Department and recommendations from the CDC for schools, child-care facilities, and camps. The Zoo's Safety and Risk Management Department also helps us to create the policies that the Education Department follows for our programs, based on the most up-to-date guidance.

Our policies may change as guidance changes. We will send updates before your program begins. More information can be found on our website [here](#).

If your child begins to exhibit certain symptoms at Camp (e.g. fever, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.), we will contact you to pick up your camper.

What is the counselor to camper ratio?

Camp Joey: There is 1 to 5 ratio of paid staff to campers, plus additional teen volunteers for each group as well. Each group of 15 campers will have three paid staff and 1-2 volunteer staff.

Camp KangaZoo and Teen Camp maintain an approximate 1 to 5 counselor to camper ratio. There are at least three paid counselors and 1-2 teen volunteers for each group of 16 – 18 campers.

Specialty Camp maintains a 1 to 8 camper ratio. Each group of 16 has two paid counselors assigned to them and may be assisted by college interns and/or high school volunteers.

More information about specific Camp staff will be included in your parent packet.

What if my child has allergies – food or otherwise?

Make sure to list your child's allergies, or other information about your camper in the CampDoc parent portal. Please be specific about nut allergies – peanuts vs. tree nuts or specific types of nuts, and whether foods “processed in a facility that also processes nuts” (e.g. plain M&M's) are appropriate. Likewise, with other allergies, please be specific about what campers can and cannot consume, touch or breathe (liquid milk vs. milk as an ingredient, etc.)

If your child carries emergency medication, like an Epi-pen, you will need to complete the medication section in the CampDoc parent portal, including uploading a copy of the FARE (Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan) form.

Please note, **Camp Joey** is peanut and tree nut free, in addition to the policies above.

What if my child needs to take medicine during Camp?

If your child needs to take medication during Camp, you must complete the Medication section in the CampDoc parent portal for prescribed and over the counter medications. *You are responsible for maintaining accurate medication records for your child in that portal.* At Camp, our staff will remind your child to take their medicine as you indicate. Trained Zoo personnel will only administer medication (such as an Epi-pen) in an emergency situation.

Any over the counter or prescription medication or supplements brought to Camp need to be in the original container with prescription information and dosage printed on the label, with the camper's name as the medication recipient, and needs to be in the correct pre-measured dose. Feel free to call the Camp Director to discuss any specific needs. You may view our Medication Administration Policy [here](#).

What is the inclement weather plan?

Camp is a rain or shine program! Please plan ahead and dress appropriately. In the case of severe weather, campers will be escorted to a secure and safe indoor location until such time as it is safe to go back outside. The Camp staff monitors the weather at all times, as well as stays in constant communication via two-way radios, and adjusts schedules as needed for potential storms, extreme heat, and/or air quality alerts.

How is safety and security managed at the Zoo?

The Zoo is dedicated to ensuring the safety of all guests, staff and animals. The Zoo has its own security team made up of highly skilled and trained women and men who keep guests, staff and animals safe and keep the grounds secure 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Many of them have law enforcement backgrounds and the team must maintain certification requirements by both the State of Missouri and the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. Additionally, the Zoo has an explosives and weapons detection dog (“Speedy”) and, new in fall 2024, there is a security screening system, called the Evolv system, at both the North and South Entrances. This new security screening system is designed to detect concealed weapons as guests enter the Zoo.

Inclusion Services

What is our Camp Inclusion philosophy?

Everyone benefits when children of all abilities play and learn together. Every child should have the opportunity to participate in our conservation education programs with appropriate support.

What inclusion services can the Zoo provide?

The Zoo has trained educators who work to meet the needs of all 10-16 campers in their group. They can make minor modifications as needed.

When children require increased support, there are four Camp inclusion specialists available to provide it. However, these four specialty staff are available to support any of the 112 campers that require it. Each Camp inclusion staff person serves multiple campers, often in separate groups.

Campers for whom our inclusion model works well can participate in activities in a group of 10-20 campers with one or two educators, without a Camp inclusion staff person for most of the day. (See additional criteria below.)

Campers needing the one-on-one support of an assigned aide or para may bring their own support person, provided they pass a criminal background check. A copy of that background check must be provided to the Zoo, prior to Camp starting.

Campers that the Zoo's inclusion staffing levels can support:

- Do not require 1:1 support during the school year
- Can stay with a group in public places without 1:1 support. With our summer crowds, trains, and live animals this is a particular safety concern.
- Need only occasional short breaks away from the group
- Can understand and follow simple directions, with only occasional help and reminders
- Can tolerate elevated temperatures and being outside most of the day
- Can walk independently for long distances each day, unless a wheelchair or other device is needed – or when given brief rest breaks.
- Do well with multiple transitions each day and some level of unpredictability

Campers that will require an aide (provided by their families):

- Require 1:1 support during the school year
- Need help with self-care (eating and toileting)
- Are an elopement risk (tend to run away from groups/adults). With our summer crowds, trains and live animals, this is a particular safety concern.
- Have significant impulse challenges that cannot be easily redirected (i.e. Cannot understand that the food & attractions they see while at Camp are not available to them.)
- Cannot spend much of the day doing the same activities as the group
- Need 1:1 support to understand and follow a group plan
- Cannot adapt to transitions with reminders and some unpredictability
- Are significantly challenged by sensory input (animal noises, smells, warm temperatures)

Campers that Zoo Camps cannot successfully support:

- Need a therapeutic camp rather than an inclusion model
- Are unable to be in large groups much of the day
- Have aggressive behaviors with adults or peers or self-injure
- Have impulse control challenges that prevent them from being safe in a large, open public setting

Why does the Zoo require more support than other camps, school or home?

The Zoo is a large, open public space, which is vastly different from a classroom with walls, a door and a fenced playground. While there are many benefits to outdoor learning, we recognize that for some campers it poses challenges. They can feel overwhelmed and unable to focus, or struggle to stay with the group, and unlike running down a school hallway, they are running through thousands of strangers in a place that also has trains, large animals and bodies of water. A 1:1 aide allows campers to have the support they need to succeed, while maintaining a safe educator to camper ratio.

What if my child’s chronological age and development do not correlate?

Our programs are developmentally appropriate for the set age range listed. We realize that sometimes developmental level does not correlate to chronological age. If this is the case, you can reach out to us to determine the best placement for your child. Only children under 18 and within a 2-year age range will be considered for a modified placement.

Which camp is best for my child?

Camp KangaZoo	Specialty Camp
More outside time	Less outside time
More walking	Less walking
Some large group activities, up to 114 campers	Small group activities of no more than 16 campers
More active environment	More academic environment

What can parents do to prepare their camper for success?

- Visit the Zoo ahead of time and discuss how a family visit is different than a camp day
- Practice ahead of time new or challenging skills or routines (unpacking and eating lunch, sitting on the ground, carrying a water bottle, etc.)
- Hike/walk long distances of 2-4 miles
- In advance, share with inclusion staff as much as possible about your child so that we can best meet their needs

Who do I reach out to with Camp inclusion questions?

Please contact zooinclusion@stlzoo.org to help with any camp inclusion questions. You may also complete our [Accessibility and Inclusion Request form](#) online.



CampDoc Portal FAQs

What is the CampDoc parent portal?

CampDoc is a cloud-based camper management and health record software system. It is a subset of DocNetwork, and it allows you to provide information about your camper's health history, inclusion needs, medications, and authorized pick-up people, to assist Zoo staff in keeping your camper safe and healthy. It also allows for quick communication from the Zoo staff to you, if you sign up for text alerts, in the unlikely event that there is an emergency during Camp.

NOTE: Some organizations use CampDoc for camp registration. The Saint Louis Zoo does NOT use CampDoc for this purpose.

How is the information I provide used?

The information you provide will be accessible to the Camp staff leading that week of Camp. The information you provide assists staff with basic information about the camper (age, grade level, language spoken, pronouns), as well as emergency contacts should they be needed. Additional information regarding health history, medications and allergies are also part of the profile. This information is only accessed if needed.

An additional section entitled "trusted contacts" is where you will list who is authorized to drop off and pick up your child from Camp. **Make sure to include yourself!** You can even upload a picture of the person for additional security. CampDoc' check-in and check-out system tracks who dropped off/picked up the camper and at what time, as well as noting the Zoo staff member who verified. If a person is NOT listed as a trusted contact, the camper will not be released to that person until a parent is contacted, even if they have a camper ID tag.

By having this information electronically in the cloud, it allows for fast and easy access to staff at any time during camp. Trusted contacts can be updated at ANY time, so you can provide the most up-to-date information to Zoo staff, as needed. Additionally, it eliminates paper usage and storage.

You are our partner in camper safety and enjoyment! By providing as much information as possible regarding allergies, medications, special needs, behaviors to expect, concerns, etc., you help us to keep your child safe and provide a great Camp experience!

Is CampDoc secure?

Each camper has their own unique profile (if you have multiple children, you will need to complete each camper profile individually). CampDoc is HIPPA and FERPA compliant and encrypted with AES 256 bit encryption as well as multiple infrastructure certifications. More security information can be found [here](#).

How do I access CampDoc?

The email of the parent or legal guardian for the camper will be provided during the Camp registration process. (NOTE: The email is for the person who has permanent legal guardianship for the camper, as it relates to health and legal decisions.)

Approximately three weeks prior to the Camp start date, that parent or legal guardian of registered campers (not campers on the wait list) will receive an email from “**Saint Louis Zoo via CampDoc <noreply@campdoc.com>**” inviting them to complete the camper profile. Once the email is received, the parent or legal guardian must complete the camper profile within one week. CampDoc will email automatic reminders, as needed, if a profile is not fully complete. ***Failure to complete the profile could result in your camper not being able to attend camp.***

Additional authorized users can be added as well, if the authorized parent or legal guardian would like to allow other people to complete and/or have access to the camper profile.

Who do I contact if I am struggling navigating the CampDoc portal?

While the CampDoc portal is very user-friendly, there are sometimes challenges and the team is always happy to help. If you need assistance, you can email the CampDoc support email at support@docnetwork.org or "contact us" via chat on the [website](#).