

10

VERY
COOL

LOW COST AND EASY

SUMMER CAMP
PROGRAM
IDEAS



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PAINT YOUR COUNSELOR DAY

During counselor training, the counselors vote on the theme. Themes have included heroes and villains, Disney Characters, Storybook Favorites, Cereal mascots and super heroes to name a few.

Once the theme is chosen each group must choose which counselor will be painted and what character he or she would be. Each group is in charge of planning their design and must submit paint color requests at least 48 hours before the event.

On the day of the event, the groups each find a private location to do the actual painting- then all groups meet together and a winning counselor is chosen.

While the kids get rather competitive, they know it is all in good fun, and everyone enjoys seeing the final product.



Edited excerpt from the Best Programs Roundtable.



THE RAINBOW GAME

The Rainbow Game game can be played anywhere there are hiding places, inside or outside, as long as you have defined boundaries.

Each of our specialists gets a different face paint color and they hide anywhere in our main building with a walkie-talkie. Then teams of campers search for them.

They must find them in order by color which is determined before we start. If you find someone out of order you have to move on and look for them again later when you need that color. Once you find the right specialist with the right color they add their color to a rainbow on your hand/arm or face.

The goal is to be the first group to get their rainbow and return to the start. To make it fun, specialists can change location during the game. This usually lasts 45 - 1 hour and we play with campers ages 3 - 10.

Edited excerpt from The Best Things We Did This Summer Roundtable.



OUR OWN PHOTO BOOTH

At our camp we did a photo booth and had lots of fun props for them to take pictures with. We got some darling photos for our scrap books and the kids had a blast posing!

We just set up an area in one of our rooms with props & took pics. It was hours of fun, and the picture will make great memories.



Edited excerpt from The Best Things We Did This Summer Roundtable.



THE IMPOSSIBLE SHOT

This summer we began what we called “The Impossible Shot” after each large group activity.

Our normal practice is to gather the whole camp together in one spot to tell the results of the game. We began to do this impossible shot where we would present a very difficult task in which we chose 1 boy and 1 girl from each team (we had 4 teams) that would try to accomplish the assigned task/shot. For example, one shot was to throw a Frisbee full court into the basketball ball goal. Very difficult shot, and no one actually scored it, but the thrill was in trying and several hit the backboard.

We offered a lot of extra points for the team that make the “impossible shot” (which did happen a few times during the summer), and some events, we just gave extra points to whichever team was the closest.

This may seem like something so simple, but the juniors and teens were both asking after every group activity, “Are we doing the impossible shot?!? Pick me, pick me!!!” They loved it so much.

Edited excerpt from The Best Things We Did This Summer Roundtable.



FULL CAMP SPONGE WAR

Each cabin at camp gets a bucket of sponges. The groups then travel around together battling other groups in dodgeball like sponge wars. Each group starts as a different color signified by a head band. When a group defeats another group the defeated group changes to the color of the victorious group.

To win a battle you hit all the campers in the other group before they hit all of your campers.

When you are hit you sit down and wait for the battle to be over. You can only battle one group at a time and cannot travel as multiple cabins.

This worked out great with no color ever winning. It was also fun to see the defeated group and winning group join the same color and play on, instead of continuing to battle or be upset. There are a million variations that we didn't get a chance to try this summer but could be tried. It worked well for us because it turned out to be safer than capture the flag and entertained the same kind of kids and more.

The sponges we use are just big grout sponges cut into 6 or 8 pieces.

Edited excerpt from The Best Things We Did This Summer Roundtable.



30 SECOND DANCE PARTY

This year we started a new tradition. It's called the "30 Second dance Party".

Now I wish I could take full credit for this. But I heard about this at an ACA conference in Ohio.

The 30 Second Dance Party happens at "random" times during the day (meals, evening programs, etc.). Over the PA system someone yells, "30 SECOND DANCE PARTY!" The music start playing for about 30 seconds. Everyone gets up and Dances!



What I did was to have our sound/DJ guy pick out appropriate songs. Using editing software he added the person yelling 30 sec dance party and edit the song down to the 30 seconds. I had him set up a dozen or so songs. He put them in his computer. I attached my media remote control to his laptop and when I needed/wanted the dance party

all I had to do was hit the remote and the whole thing happened "magically". He didn't need to be

by the sound board all day/evening. I could control it from across the lodge.

The campers and staff LOVE this.

It was so popular that we started getting song requests. We also did a few without the remote and would let a camper to use the mic and yell the 30 sec dance party.

Edited excerpt from The Best Things We Did This Summer Roundtable.



MASCOT MAILBOX

This idea can be done with any mascot, fairy, or other character your camp creates, whether it be a mascot, forest fairy or camp pirate.

At our camp, we have a mailbox specifically for our mascot, Rusty the Raccoon. Campers write notes to Rusty about anything. They most often detail their time at camp and ask lots of questions about what it's like to be a raccoon, "Are you a nice, tame raccoon, or do you still eat from the garbage?"

Rusty "dictates" a response to the program director, who writes a note back to the camper on special paper. We call these Rusty Grams, and they are handed out with the daily mail.

Although not all the campers write to Rusty, those who do get SO excited for his responses. It's often the seemingly insignificant parts of camp that help it stand out in the minds of the campers.

Edited excerpt from the Making Camp Magical and Special Roundtable.



COUNSELOR THROWDOWN

A few times a week we gather the entire camp together and the kids get to challenge the staff to some sort of competition. (We have done everything from kickball to bubble blowing to flicks to charades.) Whatever the kids can think of.

They give us two choices, we talk about it and then accept one of their challenges. The next time we have a counselor throwdown we get to challenge the kids and they get to choose which challenge to accept.

We keep the score on the wall outside of our main room, so that our parents and kids can see who is currently in the lead. (We have never lost, but it has been close a couple of years.)

The kids enjoy this because they like that they can both accept challenges and throw challenges out. For example, they have challenged us to kickball every year and lost. Until last year when they FINALLY won! You have never heard a more deafening cry of victory than at the moment the kids realized they had beaten us.

Edited excerpt from the Making Camp Magical and Special Roundtable.



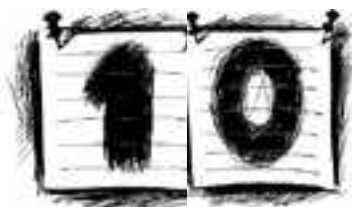
SECRET PLACE

Secret Place is a tradition that was taken from the book *The Education of Little Tree* by Forest Carter.

Little Tree is a Native American boy who is orphaned and raised by his grandparents in a one room mountain cabin with no electricity or running water. His grandparents teach him the ways of the forest and land. Little Tree's grandfather encourages his grandson to find a "secret place" for reflecting on life's situations, to think, and to connect with nature.

Counselors and mentors use the Secret Place idea as a venue for cabin meetings of celebration or to discuss cabin issues and problems. Staff and Campers recognize a Secret Place meeting as one of respect. Where are good spots at your camp for a secret place?

Edited excerpt from the Making Camp Magical and Special Roundtable.



SURPRISE COUNSELOR DRESS-UP DAYS

Each session the staff decide on a day when they all wear different Halloween costumes, matching costumes, or some sort of themed outfits (or just mustaches!). It's coordinated between all 40 staff members. In the 10+ years I have been here no one has ever intentionally missed a day.

We also do crafts and activities throughout the day to either help the kids make similar costumes/ masks/ hats/ mustaches/ etc. OR the staff totally play it off like they aren't dressed weird- which drives the kids nuts!

The kids never know when it will happen, but they LOVE it...and so do the parents!! Who wouldn't love having their kids signed in by a cow at morning drop-off?!

Edited excerpt from the Traditions Roundtable.



Digital downloads of all our past Roundtables are available for purchase in our online store at [RecreationPros.com](https://www.RecreationPros.com).