



## Tips for Helping Your Child Say “Good-Bye”

For some young children, the first few days of camp can be an emotional roller-coaster. Even if they have parted from mom and dad previously at preschool or with babysitters with no problem at all, camp is a new setting.

Whether your child comes to us from other programs or it is your child’s first experience at camp, new environments are sometimes scary for children to navigate.

**Below, please find some tips to help you prepare your child for his/her fun-filled upcoming week at one of our Little Athletes’ camps and how to handle a possible tearful goodbye.**

1. Be prepared for a check-in line. We promise to make every effort to move the check-in line along as quickly as possible, but on the first-day check-in naturally takes longer. Some kids experience anxiety around the anticipation of saying good-bye. Distracting your child with fun stories or sharing memories from the weekend while they wait can alleviate anxiety until the goodbye is imminent.
2. After checking in, a counselor will introduce themselves and assist your child with where to go. We encourage you to:
  - Enthusiastically greet them back so that your child can see you are confident and excited to meet the counselors.
  - Tell your child that they will have a fun day playing sports and activities with friends and that you will see them at lunchtime (or after lunch for those that have camps running until 2pm).
  - Give your kisses and hugs, and then leave your child in the hands of the counselors.
  - Ensure that your child hears you say, “Goodbye,” so they understand you are leaving them in trusted hands. We encourage you not to “disappear” when they are not looking, as this can cause confusion and anxiety.
3. If your child is crying or appears unhappy, we understand it can be hard to leave them. In most cases, they will stop crying shortly after you are out of sight and begin having fun. Please trust that if the separation anxiety is extended beyond what is “normal,” we will get in touch with you. Our counselors are skilled in acknowledging your child’s woe, providing compassion, and then moving right into engaging them with fun activities. If your child is crying and clinging to you, the best thing to do is pick up your child and hand him/her to a counselor so that your child sees that you trust this counselor and are placing him/her in the care of the counselor. Then, try to leave as quickly as possible, so your child has an opportunity to come to terms with your departure.
4. Remember, Day 2 may be just as difficult, but each day your child’s relationship with the counselors and comfort in the new environment gets stronger, and it will get easier.

Please remember, separation anxiety is normal. Children need some time to learn to trust the new space, their caregivers’ role in their day, and that you will be returning for them at a particular point in the schedule. Our staff is prepared and understands that this is a normal part of the 3, 4, 5-year-old development.