



Camp Frequently Asked Questions

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General Camp Questions

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 two mini-weeks that are four days in length.

Camp KangaZoo is our camp experience for children entering 2nd-6th grade. They will explore the Zoo, learning all about animals that call the Zoo home. Camp KangaZoo is typically Monday through Thursday, culminating in an evening event on the final night of Zoo Camp.

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

Specialty camps are deep dives into specific topics, and are a great way for campers to explore very specific 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 typically offered Monday through Thursday.

We also offer “break camps” for school age children throughout the year. These break camps include Black Friday, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Spring Break weeks, and more.

Why did the ages for Camp KangaZoo and Camp Joey change in 2023?

Due to Missouri State regulations, which define Summer Camp as a program for children 5 and up, we are no longer offering summer camps to children younger than 5 years old. To meet the regulations, Camp Joey, which was for preschool children age 4-5, is now for children at least 5 years old who are entering Kg-1st grade, and Camp KangaZoo is serving children entering 2nd-6th grade.

Whichever Zoo Camp your children attend, we are confident that they will have a fun, engaging and developmentally-appropriate experience.

What are the exact times, dates and prices?

Please go back to the [Camp Programs page](#) and click on the link for the camp session (Joey, KangaZoo, Teen, or Specialty) you are most interested in. The dates, prices, and times are listed there for each camp

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

Each camper can only register for one session of Camp KangaZoo, Teen Camp or Camp Joey, and can also register for one session of each title of Specialty Camp within their grade level. The Camp Joey, KangaZoo, and Teen Camp sessions are exactly the same week-to-week, which is one reason that we only allow one session per camper. We'd also love for as many different children as possible to experience a week of Zoo Camp!

How do I register for camp?

Please review complete registration information [here](#). Registration for Zoo Friends members opens March 14 at 9 a.m. and General Public registration opens March 15 at 1 p.m. Registration is online only.

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 mid-March. 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 May 1, and then review and award them.

Last year Zoo Camps sold out very quickly. Will I be able to register this summer?

We'd love to be able to make that promise, but unfortunately we can't. To try to accommodate the demand, we have added additional spaces to Camp Joey (which is now for Kg-1st grade,) Camp KangaZoo (2nd-6th grade), Teen Camp (7th-9th grade) and added an additional session of the most popular Specialty Camp titles, Junior Marine Biologist (6th-7th grade) and Senior Marine Biologist (7th-9th grade).

We highly recommend registering for Camp as soon as possible (see dates above,) and if Camp is sold out, you should still add yourself to the wait list and we will contact you if a spot opens up.

The country-wide staffing shortages, especially in the education field, are affecting how many campers we can accommodate. If you know anyone who would make an amazing camp counselor – please refer them to our website <https://stlzoo.org/jobs>

Can I attend Camp with my child?

As a general rule, this is not allowed. However, if your child has special needs or requires one-on-one assistance, you may be allowed to come as your child's aide. Please refer to our [Inclusion Statement/FAQs](#) for more information and details about this procedure and requirements you will need to meet.

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 Jayne Ullstrom at (314) 646-4699.

LOGISTICS – Camp Locations, Daily Schedules, etc.

Where is Camp located at the Zoo?

KangZoo and Teen Camp: Indoor activities occur in classrooms on the lower level of the Primate House, in The Living World and at the Exploration Outpost, which is located on the lower level of the Orthwein Animal Nutrition Center. Outdoor activities take place primarily in the yard and tents between the Primate House and the Herpetarium, in the green space in the middle of Historic Hill, and in a yard near the Exploration Outpost. We also spend time at many animal habitats, both indoors and out.

Camp Joey Indoor activities occur in the Bayer Education Gallery in the lower level of The Living World. Outdoor activities take place throughout the Zoo. We also spend time at many animal habitats, both indoors and out.

Specialty Camps: Indoor activities occur in classrooms in The Living World. Outdoor activities take place at various locations throughout the Zoo and, in some cases, off site from the Zoo campus (example: Senior Marine Biologist has a field trip component for water quality assessment at an off-site location). The campers also visit many 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?

Full details about pick up, drop off and other Camp policies are sent to you in the Camp information packet which you will receive later this spring, after you register for Camp.

Since some camps (Camp KangaZoo and Teen Camp) pick up on the south side of the Zoo on Wells Drive, and some (Camp Joey and Specialty Camps) pick up on the north side on Government Drive, you may need to stop at both locations.

Camp Joey pick-up begins at 2:45 on the north side of the Zoo. If you also have children in Camp KangaZoo or Teen Camp you will pick-up at Camp Joey first. You will then be driving in the correct direction to in get in line for pick up on the south side of the Zoo for Camp KangaZoo and Teen Camp starting at 2:50 p.m. We will never leave your camper unattended, even if you are a little late to a pick up. Specialty Camp pick up is at 3:30 p.m., so there is no need to arrive early.

Please be patient with us during pick up. We do camper pick up as quickly and efficiently as we can; however, your safety and the safety of your children and our other visitors are our top priorities, *followed by* efficiency.

What do the campers do all day?

Camp Joey begins each day with themed exploration stations. Campers can select which activities they would like to do, as they are introduced to the day's theme. Campers then gather for an introductory skit and to hear about the day, before breaking

into groups. Each day, campers will participate in active outdoor games, indoor crafts and activity centers, tours of the Zoo, visits to Zoo attractions and camp songs.

Camp KangaZoo: Each day starts with small group games and get-to-know-you activities. At about 8:40 a.m. we join together for our amazing “Camp Rocks” music session with our Camp Musician. Then the campers and counselors split up into their age-based groups. The groups all rotate through activities during the day, like games, crafts, hands-on activities, Zoo experiences and Zoo tours, etc.

Along with visiting our amazing animals, campers visit Stingrays at Caribbean Cove, attend the Sea Lion Show and ride the Zooline Railroad. Camp concludes with an evening program on Thursday night.

Teen Camp: Each day starts with small group games and get-to-know-you activities. At about 8:30 a.m., we join together for our amazing “Camp Rocks” music session with our Camp Musician, and then the Teen Campers join their own counselors for the day’s activities. Each day, campers participate in games, crafts, Zoo tours and small group activities or projects. The Teen Camp schedule is more flexible than the Camp KangaZoo schedule and counselors try to meet the camper’s unique interests whenever possible and appropriate.

Along with visiting our amazing animals, campers visit Stingrays at Caribbean Cove, attend the Sea Lion Show, and ride the Zooline Railroad. Camp concludes with an overnight on Thursday night. A complete list of what to bring to Teen Camp and the overnight can be found in the parent packet that will be mailed to you later in May.

Campers in **Specialty Camp** will have varying experiences, depending upon the specialty camp title. All campers have a home base (one of the Zoo classrooms), where they may take part in potential hands-on learning experiences such as biofact exploration, dissections, game-play, or thematic crafts. Campers will explore the Zoo to see the animals, meet keepers, have animal experiences (such as touching a stingray), or make enrichment. Exact experiences will vary dependent upon the title and no two titles are the same. We also try to offer camper-led experiences, by allowing them choice in what they do (as a group or individually), when we can.

Is there unstructured time?

Campers are *always* supervised by trained Camp staff and volunteers, even during unstructured time.

Camp Joey: Campers get to choose what play activities they participate in each morning with the large group. They also have time to chat with friends during lunch. After lunch, we have “chill” time, where campers can rest or select from several quiet individual activities. In the afternoon there is another chance for campers to choose which station activities they do.

Camp KangaZoo/Teen Camp: We keep your campers busy most of the day with structured activities. The only times that could be considered unstructured are:

- Morning and Thursday evening song time – Our musician and part of the camp staff lead songs for the campers and supervise, while other camp staff are greeting campers and escorting them to Camp.
- Lunch – Campers sit with their camper group to eat their lunch and socialize with new friends.
- Snack and Dismissal – Campers enjoy a snack in our open-air tent and wait for their name to be called for pick up. Some staff supervise and entertain, and others escort campers to their cars.

Specialty Camps: Lunch time each day is unstructured free time, as well as typically time at the end of each day. Also during some classroom activities, if a camper does not want to participate (such as during dissections), alternative unstructured learning opportunities are provided.

Camp KangaZoo & Teen Camp evening programs

What is the Camp KangaZoo evening program like?

The evening program is the grand finale to a jam-packed week at Camp KangaZoo. Parents will drop off their campers at the Zoo entrance, then campers will start off the evening with a special song-time extravaganza, and then will head off to dinner with their camper group. After dinner, campers will gather together to perform skits that they have worked on during the week, then will take a night hike around the Zoo. Pick up is at 10 p.m.

Isn't there an overnight for campers other than at Teen Camp?

Once again this summer, there will not be an overnight for the Camp KangaZoo campers. We will have an overnight experience for Teen Campers

What is the Teen Camp overnight like?

The overnight is the grand finale to a jam-packed week at Camp. After check in, the teen campers eat dinner together, go on a Zoo Scavenger Hunt or other Zoo adventure and a night hike, and perform skits that they have worked on during the week. Teen Camp bedtime is between 11 and 11:30 p.m., and as long as the weather permits, the Teen Campers will sleep outside under the stars!

If rain is in the forecast, Teen Campers will spread out and sleep inside the Exploration Outpost. They will rise at 6:45 a.m., roll up the sleeping bags, eat a tasty breakfast, and then go for an early morning stroll around the Zoo. Morning pick up is at 8:30 a.m.

Can parents stay for the overnight?

No. But we do have awesome family overnight programs that are designed for parents and their children to attend together. We can't let kids have ALL the fun!

Since only Teen Camp includes an overnight, are there other ways to spend the night at the Zoo?

YES! We offer awesome family and group overnight programs at the Zoo. Families participate in activities, go on a night hike and sleep at the Zoo together! We are excited that our "Under the Sea Lion" overnights are back this summer along with our Zookeeper Challenge family overnight programs. Learn more [here!](#)

What if my teen does not want to spend the night at the Zoo?

We encourage all of the campers to spend the night at the Zoo. Usually, by Thursday night, the campers have made new friends, are very comfortable with the Zoo and their counselors, and are looking forward to the overnight. However, for those who can't spend the night, we offer an optional 11:00 p.m. pick-up on Thursday night. This allows the camper to participate in all of the evening Camp activities.

The camp registration fee is the same regardless of whether your camper spends the night.

Attending KangaZoo/Teen Camp with a friend/camp buddy

Can my child attend Camp with a friend?

Since we only have on-line registration this summer, if you want to register for Camp with a buddy, you should both plan to register early and around the same time to have the best chance of getting into the same camp session.

Camp Joey and 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, write the buddy's name in the appropriate space while registering. Please also have the buddy write your child's name on his/her registration. Please keep in mind that buddies are placed into groups based on the younger buddy's birth date.

The Teen Campers are usually all together once at the Zoo,

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, so will have plenty of time to interact with each other and make new friends.

Can my child request more than one buddy?

Please do not request more than one buddy. Circles of several buddies in a group can make the other campers in the group feel left out. Also, since groups are formed based on the camper's ages, if several buddies are added to a group, even if only one year apart, it could push other campers into a group that is not their ideal age group. Thus, by sticking to the "one buddy rule," you are helping to support all of the campers having the most age-appropriate experience and allow your child the opportunity to make new friends. 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.) If your child will not attend Camp unless he/she is with three or four friends, perhaps he/she is not ready to attend Camp.

Consider this! One of the most valuable benefits of summer camp is the opportunity for your child to grow mentally, emotionally and socially by participating in activities, meeting new people and making new friends! Check out the research about the benefits of camp on the American Camping Association website.

<https://www.acacamps.org/campers-families/because-camp/benefits-camp>

My camper is entering 7th grade (Teen Camp age) but his/her buddy is entering 6th grade (Camp KangaZoo age). Can they attend Camp together?

Maybe. We do NOT allow 6th graders to attend Teen Camp, however, we will allow 7th graders to attend Camp KangaZoo with a 6th grade buddy, if space allows after

the first week of registration. Please contact the Camp Director to ask for this exception
campoffice@stlzoo.org

Camper SAFETY – COVID, groups sizes, medications, allergies, inclusion

How can I be sure my child will be safe?

Your child's safety is our top priority, and we have many procedures in place to assure the safety of your child. All of the Educators are trained 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 in the summer to help with medical emergencies, as well as our Zoo Security team who are always available.

We use the "rule of three" at Camp, which ensures that a counselor is never alone with a camper. Educators always work in pairs, and have assistants and volunteers with them, so there are plenty of eyes to watch your child and for staff to watch each other. Educators carry two-way radios, so if a child gets separated from the group, we can immediately mobilize Zoo Security and others to help locate the child.

Staff and volunteers are all trained on our "Youth Protection Code of Conduct" regarding appropriate interactions, and staff practice 360 supervision to ensure that everyone is following the code. Camp staff and volunteers also undergo a background check, as well as a thorough interview process and reference check.

Our pick-up procedures are designed so that the parent can designate who will pick up their child. If the procedures are not followed, or we have any doubt whatsoever, we will not release the child without contacting a parent or an emergency contact person by phone.

It is important for parents to help us by notifying us of any allergies, special needs, behaviors to expect, etc. Please indicate these on the Health/Information form when you register. If your child's condition changes, or if your contact information changes, please notify us before your child's Camp session.

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 our 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.

Please check out our [Inclusion Statement/FAQ's](#) to learn more about how we support children with special needs.

What are the COVID-19 safety protocols?

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.

Currently (as of February 2023), we are not requiring masks except in certain behind-the-scenes animal areas. Our policies may change as guidance changes. We will send updates before your program begins.

More information can be found on our website [here](#).

Will my child be with children his/her own age?

Yes. All of the campers that are registered for a session of Camp KangaZoo are organized into a list based on their birth date and that list is divided into five groups based on age. Thus the 16 youngest campers are together, the next 16 are together, etc.

If you request a buddy for your camper within one year or grade level in age, we make sure that the buddies are together. The campers will be grouped by the younger buddy's birth date. For more information, see sections relating to the buddy system below.

Although the activities that campers participate in are similar between age groups, Camp Instructors modify the lessons and activities to fit their group's abilities and interests.

Teen Campers only spend time with the younger campers at the beginning of the day for the daily introduction and the end of the day, while awaiting pick up. With only 18 teen campers per session, they are all together for most activities, and may divide into smaller groups for other activities. The Teen Campers are the only campers with an overnight this year, so they will have the Zoo to themselves on Thursday night.

Check in/drop off for both Camp KangaZoo and Teen Camp occur at the same time and location each morning, and with up to 80 KangaZoo campers and only 18 Teen Campers, your teen camper may not see campers their own age until they get to the Camp location.

What is the counselor to camper ratio?

Camp Joey: There is 1:5 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 6 camper ratio. Each group of 12 has two paid counselors assigned to them, and may be assisted by college interns and/or high school volunteers.

Will my child feel welcome at Camp?

That is our goal. We pride ourselves on our ability to make every child feel welcome, respected, and included at our Camp.. Camp staff receive training each year on how to meet the needs and create a welcoming environment for a diverse range of campers, including diversities of race and gender identity, culture, religion, economic status, ability, thought, etc. Valuing and respecting (not just tolerating) diversity is part

of our Camp culture. We believe that Camp is better for all children because of the experiences *your* child brings. If you have concerns about your camper fitting in or being welcome, please contact the Camp Director or Inclusion team to discuss your concerns.

If your child reports that he/she is being bullied at Camp, please contact the director, and give us a chance to help the situation before the week is over. Your open communication helps us to make Camp better for everyone. Please help us to create a safe environment by talking to your Camper about appropriate touch, boundaries and conduct with peers. We have a “No Put Downs” policy and the staff are trained to enforce it, but they will not see or hear every interaction between the Campers. Make sure your Camper knows to tell someone – a counselor or parent - if they feel uneasy about any situation. If your child notifies you of any bullying or other inappropriate behavior at camp, please contact the camp director immediately so we can address the issue promptly and provide a safe place for everyone.

Unisex/gender neutral restrooms are available around the Zoo, including in the classroom area that the younger campers (generally 2nd-3rd grade) use frequently. These restrooms are also closest to the area where we start and end each day and have lunch. You can indicate on your Camp Health/Information form whether your child needs a gender-neutral restroom and can indicate what pronouns we should use to refer to your child.

What if my child has allergies?

Make sure to list your child’s allergies, or other information about your camper, when you register. 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,” like plain M&M’s, are OK or not OK to consume at Camp. 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 a [FARE - Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan](#) and the [Medicine Administration 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?

The best scenario is for children to take their medication before or after Camp, but if your child needs to take medication during the program, you must complete the Zoo’s [Medicine Administration Form](#) for prescribed and over the counter medications. We must have this completed form before your child starts camp, so either turn it in to Zoo staff at Camp check in, or before. Our Camp staff will remind your child to take their prescribed medicine. 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 and need to be in the correct pre-measured dose. Feel free to call the Camp

Director to discuss any specific needs. This is a relatively new policy, and our goal is to implement an easy and safe procedure for Camp families and staff.

What if my child follows a special diet?

Camp Joey: All snacks are peanut and tree nut free, and vegetarian. We will serve grapes, popsicles, cinnamon crackers, animal crackers and pretzels. If these snacks are not suitable for your child you may send a peanut or tree nut free alternative, you will just need to notify us that you are doing so.

Camp KangaZoo/Teen Camp: We have snacks on hand which would meet most if not all dietary needs, including fresh fruit and fruit-flavored, non-dairy, non-gluten popsicles. Our other snacks are Airly crackers and Camper Chow – a trail mix which includes Rold Gold pretzels, goldfish crackers, animal cookies, raisins, plain M&Ms, and Crispix cereal. We mix the Camper Chow ourselves and routinely leave out certain ingredients for children to make it gluten-free, kosher, vegan, dairy-free, etc. depending on the allergies listed on the child's health form. If we have any questions about your child's allergies, we will contact you.

If one of our scheduled snacks does not fit with your child's diet, we are happy to substitute a different snack that day, or you can send a snack or meal with your camper. Feel free to call the Camp Director to discuss what snacks/foods will be served at Camp on which days. This information will also be included in your parent handbook, which you will receive in May. We will contact you if we have questions about food allergies.

Specialty Camp: Campers are welcome to bring their own snacks from home. We do not provide snack, nor is snack sharing allowed.

Is Camp accessible to children who use wheelchairs?

The Exploration Outpost and The Living World are fully accessible areas. Although the Primate House lower level is not accessible, the Camp program can be modified, and locations changed so that they are fully accessible.

Is Camp appropriate for children with other special needs?

Please check out our [Inclusion Statement/FAQ's](#) to learn more about how we support children with special needs and who to contact for assistance.

What is the cell phone policy for Campers?

We prefer that Campers leave cell phones at home, because these expensive and personal items can easily be lost at the Zoo. Camp is not responsible for lost cell phones. However, if a Camper wants to bring a cell phone to use as a camera or clock, we will allow it. The counselors will tell the Campers when they are allowed and are not allowed to use their cell phone, and for what purpose. If the Camper chooses not to follow the counselor's guidelines, the camper's phone may be confiscated and returned at the end of the day.

The Teen Camp overnight sometimes includes a photo scavenger hunt or other photo-related activity. Some teens may be asked to bring their cell phone to use as a camera on Thursday night.

We want to keep all of our camper's safe. Pictures taken of other campers should not be posted to social media sites without the other camper's parent's permission.

We understand that there is a plethora of inappropriate content on the internet and want to keep your camper away from these sites while at the Zoo. By closely monitoring and limiting cell phone use by the Campers, we believe that they are more likely to interact with their fellow Campers, engage in the activities of Camp, connect with our animals and nature, and have a unique experience that they can't have anywhere else.

If you, the parent, need to contact your Camper during camp, we ask that you please contact the camp director or the camp office. Phone numbers will be on the front cover of your Parent Packet. We will bring your camper to the office to receive your phone call or contact the counselor and ask them to call you right back.

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

Camp KangaZoo/Teen Camp: campoffice@stlzoo.org.

Camp Joey: Laura Seger seger@stlzoo.org

Specialty Camp: Kim Hoormann hoormann@stlzoo.org