



2010 Family Handbook

Welcome to Netop! We look forward to a fun and exciting summer filled with many lifelong friendships, memories and experiences. This handbook will help you prepare for the upcoming season. Please note there are a number of important forms that need to be **returned by May 15**. Feel free to contact us with any questions!

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Forms to be returned by May 15

These forms are all available in the "Forms Packet" found on the Parents section of the website under "Preparing for Camp":

- Netop apparel order form
- Travel confirmation form (if arriving by public transportation)
- Personal account form
- Camper & parent questionnaires
- General permission & understanding
- Health care forms

The “Four Spokes” Philosophy

Netop’s mission is to create an enriching summer camp experience that encourages well-rounded growth in four areas of life: mental, social, physical and spiritual.

When these “four spokes” – or areas of life – are balanced and strong, one can live a more well-rounded and satisfying life. This philosophy guides the values, program and day-to-day life at Netop. Campers are encouraged to grow in many ways; for example:

Social – develop friendships, teamwork, communication, empathy and understanding

Physical – improve fitness, develop skills and learn positive sportsmanship

Mental – develop responsibility, leadership, confidence, resourcefulness, creativity, problem solving and judgment

Spiritual – strengthen values, build character, appreciate nature and enhance beliefs

Netop welcomes and respects people of all faiths. The spiritual program includes grace before meals, an informal weekly chapel service and brief evening tent discussions or “reflection”. We encourage respect for the religious perspectives of each camper and arrangements can be made for campers of particular faiths to attend services locally.

Goal Setting: Each camper will be assigned a goal setting counselor. The counselor will assist the camper in developing specific and realistic goals in each of the four areas. Campers will be encouraged to remember and achieve their goals during the camp season and throughout the coming school year. This process establishes a lifelong tool that can benefit the camper well into the future. Parents can play a supportive role in helping to reinforce this developmental growth at home.

Arrival & Departure Information

Arrival days

The requested arrival time at Netop is between **1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.** on the first day of the camp session (June 27 or July 22). Upon arrival, Netop staff will be on hand to meet, greet and help your son(s) get settled. We invite you to take a tour of Netop, but we request that your stay be relatively brief as this will enable your son(s) to transition more quickly. If your travel plans require a different arrival time, please let us know. Directions to Netop can be found on the website at www.netopsummercamp.com. Local lodging suggestions are on the website as well, if your travel plans require an overnight stay. Reservations should be made well in advance, as there are many camps with the same transition dates in the area.

Departure days

3.5 & 2.5 week sessions – July 21 & August 7

Families and friends are cordially invited to enjoy Netop on the last day of our two primary sessions (July 21 or August 7). Counselors are available to assist campers pack and load luggage into vehicles. Families may arrive to camp any time after **9:30 a.m.** We invite all families to spend some time at Netop, enjoy the activities and relax. Your son will be eager to show you around and you may want to cool off with a dip in Birch Pond, paddle a canoe or play

some tennis. A closing ceremony will take place at **11:00 a.m.** for all family members to include session highlights, awards and performances. A buffet lunch will follow at **12:00 p.m.**; campers and families should plan to depart Netop by **2:00 p.m.** If your travel plans require an early morning departure, please let us know.

10-day sessions – July 6 & July 31

On the final day of our 10-day sessions, we invite family members to **arrive at 11:00 a.m.** Counselors are available to assist campers pack and load luggage into vehicles. Families may want to tour around camp and then join us for lunch at **12:30 p.m.** We ask that families plan to depart camp at 1:30 p.m.

Arrival/departure by plane, train or bus

For campers arriving/departing by public transportation, Portland Maine offers the closest and most convenient access point. Several major airlines fly into Portland and bus/train service is also available. Arrangements to pick up or drop off campers must be made in advance. A fee will apply for transportation to/from Portland, ME, Boston, MA or Manchester, NH. See the Travel Confirmation Form for details.

Health Care Information

Your son's health and safety is our first priority. The services of our registered nurse and the use of the camp health center are included in the tuition. Whenever the attention of a physician is required, boys will be taken to a local physician or hospital, as appropriate.

Health forms: A health history and health recommendation form for each camper must be completed and returned with a signed emergency release prior to attending camp. These forms, attesting to a health examination within two years, and signed by a Licensed Health Care Professional, must be **received by May 15.** Please return the forms to: Netop Summer Camp, 1617 Hopegate Drive Maple Glen, PA 19002. All medical records are confidential.

Any special medications or dietary needs should be discussed directly with the camp nurse. Please note any special needs on the form.

Insurance: Netop does not carry health insurance on its campers. Medical insurance coverage must be provided by each camper's family. Please be sure to send a copy of the camper's insurance carrier card attached to his health form. If medical insurance is not carried by the camper's family, please give the camp a Visa or Mastercard # for which medical expenses may be charged in the event of necessary care. Any co-pays will be charged to the camper's store account.

Contacting Parents for Medical Issues: Either the camp director or nurse will contact parents if the camper is taken into a medical facility for evaluation or treatment. Additionally, if a camper runs a fever over 100 degrees F for longer than 8 hours and/or spends the night in our Health Center, the parent(s) will be contacted.

Emergency Contacts: The camp medical form includes an area for two emergency contacts. We will make every attempt to notify parents in an emergency. If you will be away from your home and/or office for even a few days during your son's camp session, please notify the camp director in writing regarding your travel plans and itinerary.

Medications: All prescriptions and over-the-counter medications brought or sent to camp must be in the original packaging/bottle, labeled with the physician's instructions, the name of the medication and the dosage. Please repeat these instructions on the camper's medical form. All medications and/or vitamins will be held by the camp nurse and will be administered by medical staff at camp.

Health Screening: Within the first 24 hours after arrival to camp, the nurse will conduct a health screen to check for any observable evidence of illness, injury or communicable disease, verify and update health history information to identify any medication, changes in health status or special needs requiring follow up, and review/collect any medications to be dispensed during the camper's stay at camp.

Special note

(The following is from Bob Ditter, a well known child and family therapist in Boston, Mass who works extensively with families and summer camps.)

ADD/ADHD – An increasing number of children are on medication for ADD/ADHD, depression or other conditions. These medications allow a child to take advantage of all that a school environment has to offer. Camp is no different in this regard, but some prescribing physicians may take a child off medication during the summer. There are pros and cons to this approach and the right decision depends on the child and circumstances. Many times children at camp need their usual dosage or more, given that stimulants, for example, are often metabolized more quickly in warm weather or active children. Camp provides a wide range of great activities, some of which require careful attention to safety and risk management; for example, archery and sailing. If your son is currently on a medication and you are planning a change in that medication any time up to six weeks before camp, please discuss it with us. Working together, we have the best chance to help your child have a safe, happy and memorable time with us.

Communication During Camp

Mail: Campers love to get mail. Letters and cards from home are encouraged. Mail will be delivered to campers on a daily basis (except Sunday). The camp mailing address for letters is:

**Netop Summer Camp
12 Netop Road
Casco, ME 04015**

Each camper will be required to write a letter home at least once per week. It is helpful if you send some pre-addressed, stamped envelopes to simplify the process.

Email: Messages to campers can be accepted via email to info@netopsummercamp.com. However, campers do not have access to computers and, therefore, cannot reply electronically. We will distribute email messages along with regular mail. Letters are more personal and we ask that incoming emails be limited to twice per week.

Telephone calls: We request that campers do not receive phone calls at camp, unless special arrangements have been made. Some campers have a difficult time adjusting to camp after talking with their relatives or friends on the phone. In case of a family emergency or camper birthday, please contact a Director to arrange a phone conversation with your son. The main number for the camp is 207-627-4510 and Steve Hallowell's cell phone is 215-284-3629. Parents are welcome to call and speak with a Director at any time; even for a brief check-in.

Care packages: Please do not send “care packages” to camp or have your child arrive with food, candy or beverages. Food attracts animals and bugs and can create a health hazard. Campers receive ample and well-balanced meals throughout the day, along with special snacks from time to time. We appreciate your cooperation and ask that you inform friends and relatives about this policy. Any packages received will be held in the office and not distributed.

Camp Store Account

Netop has a small camp store for items such as snacks, beverages, postcards, stamps, toothpaste and bug spray. The store is open several times each week for a short time. Campers are limited to purchasing one snack item plus one beverage. The store account may also be used to provide spending money for certain camp outings, such as Beach Trips, as well as special woodcraft and leathercraft items. We ask that you complete a “Personal Account” form and send it back with a check. Please note that all profits from the camp store and any residual amounts left in a camper’s account will be donated to the Netop Scholarship Fund. Each year, this fund assists families with financial limitations in sending their son to camp.

Electronics, Money & Valuables

Electronics: Netop subscribes to the concept of Wireless Interpersonal Networking (WIN). Dr. Christopher Thurber defines WIN as follows: *To have a completely free, real-time, face-to-face authentic conversation with another human being.* One of the great features about being at camp in the middle of the Maine woods is the opportunity to “unplug” from our assorted electronic gadgets. Netop campers stay busy with a wide range of outdoor activities and social interactions. Therefore, **all** electronic devices are to be left at home. This includes: cell phones, personal music players (e.g. iPods), radios, CD players, laptops, portable video games, electronic games, etc. Counselors are permitted to have a radio/CD player for the tent group, which may be played at his discretion; for example, during tent clean-up each morning.

Should campers arrive to camp with electronic devices, we will store these safely in the camp office for the duration of the session.

Money & valuables: We advise against sending cash with your son. Likewise, there is no need for campers to have valuable items at camp, including expensive watches. Therefore, we recommend that these items be left at home.

What to Pack

The “Packing List” (on the website) will give you guidance on how to pack for camp. In general, try not to over-pack! There is limited space in the tents and campers are more comfortable – and can keep better track of things – if they have only what they need.

Regarding bedding, campers sleep on comfortable cots with mattresses. Please send two sets of sheets, a blanket(s) and pillow. A sleeping bag should be brought for trips out of camp, but not substituted in place of sheets/blanket for the regular bed at camp.

Buying Netop apparel: All Netop apparel can be ordered using the Netop Apparel Order Form. Note that campers need a minimum of two Netop tee shirts and one athletic mesh shorts. These are used for inter-camp sports and events. A selection of additional Netop items is available for purchase. All items will be shipped directly to camp and distributed to campers upon arrival. Netop apparel will be marked at camp with the camper’s name.

Laundry service: Each camper changes his clothes daily and bed sheets weekly. Laundry will be sent out in a bag weekly for each camper and it will be returned within 24 hours. Please mark all of your son's belongings, including the laundry bag. Laundry bags are available for purchase in the camp store. The camp is not responsible for clothing, equipment and other personal items that are left behind or misplaced.

Daily Life at Netop

Daily schedule: While each day at Netop can bring something new, here's the flow of a typical camper day.

7:30 a.m.	Reveille/Exercises/Flag raising
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:40 a.m.	Tent clean up
9:00 a.m.	Instructional activity period 1
10:00 a.m.	Instructional activity period 2
11:00 a.m.	Instructional activity period 3
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	Rest hour
2:30 p.m.	Afternoon activities/special events/team sports
4:00 p.m.	Open waterfront/free swim
5:00 p.m.	Free time
6:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Evening activities & programs
9:00 p.m.	Reflection time
9:15 p.m.	Taps/bedtime (seniors have late privileges until 10:15 p.m.)

Note: Campers choose morning activity periods in four-day blocks. Campers will be encouraged to try new things, but they may also decide to repeat activities to build skill.

Tent assignments: Campers live together by age groups and share most meals together. Tent assignments for campers and counselors are determined just before camp begins. We will do our best to accommodate requests; however, we cannot guarantee that your son will be in a certain tent with specific people. In fact, we encourage hometown friends and relatives to branch out whenever possible. Camp provides endless opportunities for friends – new and old – to be together and have fun.

Conduct: Netop is a community where all campers and staff live together in a safe, fun and rewarding environment. Each person has a responsibility to contribute in a positive way to the community. We expect behavior that includes respect for others, good sportsmanship, being a good team player, following instructions, respecting the belongings of others and offering encouragement. Behaviors considered unacceptable include bullying, causing another person to be uncomfortable, hitting or fighting, foul or abusive language, destroying property, stealing, tent raids or poor table manners. We expect campers and staff to be helpful and friendly and uphold the Netop ideals to make the experience successful for all. Unacceptable behavior can result in dismissal from camp.

Parent/Child Issues

Homesickness: Dr. Christopher Thurber defines homesickness as the distress or impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home. These feelings relate to fears of the unknown, fears of failure, fears of loss of loved ones, and overall anxiety. Homesickness is

common and it usually manifests in stomachaches, headaches, misbehaving and statements of “disliking camp and missing home”. Generally, it lasts for a short period of time and the camper adjusts to camp by feeling familiar with his surroundings, schedule, friends and counselors. The key to dealing with homesickness is to try and prevent it by preparing your child before camp. Here are a few tips and suggestions:

- Discuss the camp schedule and what camp will be like and give him a chance to voice any concerns he might have.
- Plan sleepovers with friends and relatives to help him get used to being away from home.
- Please do not tell your child that you will “rescue” him from camp if he doesn’t like camp. He will hold onto this thought into his camp session and it could prolong his homesickness.
- Try not to mention how much you will miss your son. Instead, emphasize how proud you are of him and how excited you are about his camp opportunity.
- Send a letter to your child before camp so that he has a letter waiting for him at camp.
- Let your child bring a favorite stuffed animal or family photo so he can feel comfortable in his new surroundings.

If your son sends you the dreaded “I hate camp and I want to come home” letter, please consider the following when writing a letter in return:

- Since camp is an opportunity for your child to grow, mature and gain independence, tell him you love him very much and you have confidence in his ability to cope with his feelings and overcome his anxiety. It is important to be calm, reassuring and consistent.
- Acknowledge your child’s feelings by writing him, for example, “you seem scared (or lonely or sad). Have you talked with your counselor about how you are feeling?” Encourage your son to take advantage of all the activities at camp and focus on simple goals he can attain. Design your letter to acknowledge his feelings but move on to questions about what he can accomplish and achieve at camp. Please avoid ending your letters by saying you miss him or what he may be missing at home.
- Do not make promises like, “I’ll pick you up from camp next week if you’re still unhappy”, or, “I’ll call you on Tuesday at 4:00 p.m.”. These statements will only prolong his homesickness, not reassure him of your love.

Research has shown that 95% of all children miss something about home while away at camp. Even though homesick feelings are common, most kids enjoy themselves tremendously at overnight summer camp. Homesickness, and getting over it, is a normal process that helps children develop independence and self-confidence.

Recommended Readings: Please think of us as a partner in your son’s well being. We have a common interest – the growth, safety, and happiness of your son(s). Good communication between campers, counselors, parents and directors is essential. There are many excellent books on parenting and child development. Here are a few books that you may want to read:

- How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk, by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish
- The Blessing of a Skinned Knee, by Wendy Mogel, Ph.D.
- Raising Cain, by Michael Thompson, Ph.D. and Dan Kindlon, Ph.D.
- The Summer Camp Handbook, by Christopher Thurber, Ph.D. and Jon Malinowski, Ph.D.
- The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness, by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.
- Get Out of My Life, by Anthony E. Wolf, Ph.D.
- Real Boys, by William Pollack, Ph.D.
- Positive Discipline, by Jane Nelson, Ed.D.
- Emotional Intelligence, by Daniel Goleman

- Last Child in the Woods, Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder, by Richard Louv
- Bob Ditter articles – see sample on next page (more on www.bobditter.com.)

Early Summer Letter to Parents: Camp - Fun, Friendship and Taking Time to Grow

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Summer camp can be a wonderful experience for children, full of fun and lasting friendships. Though these reasons alone are enough to make camp the special place it is, there is more.

Part of what is so powerful and enduring about camp is the “growing up” children do while they are here. Some campers need more time than others to get used to the routines, to adjust to living with others and to deal with the conflicts, challenges and choices that inevitably come with group living. What a great opportunity for children to learn to manage their emotions, to tolerate individual differences and to discover that they can, without constant help from their parents, resolve many issues on their own.

What parent doesn't want their child to be more self-reliant and develop even stronger coping skills? Learning by experience, however, takes time and patience. Children are always a “work in process” —a work that evolves day by day. It requires the ability to keep ones perspective, knowing that, like all of us, children have days that are better than others. The job of growing up takes coaching, encouragement and support —something campers receive from a whole variety of caring adults, including their counselors, group leaders, division leaders and others.

Sometimes parents hear about the distress their children may be experiencing at camp during an adjustment period, like feeling homesick, trying to fit in or be accepted, make new friends or get acclimated to the routines. This can be understandably stressful for you as a parent, since you obviously want the best for your child and you can't be “right there” to help out. It can be frustrating for parents to hear an anguished child on a phone call and be too far away to get the whole story or relieve the urgency.

If you should experience such a moment this summer, it helps to remember two important things about children and their adjustment to camp. First, children behave very differently depending on where they are and what group they are with. For example, they certainly don't behave the same way with their friends on the playground at school as they do when they are at a formal family gathering. Understanding this, don't be too surprised if your child exhibits behavior at camp you have never seen in them before, much of which is positive, but some of which may be problematic or challenging.

Secondly, remember that many children save their “worst” for their parents. Sharing distress with Mom or Dad is a quick way to re-establish closeness in just a few short moments. This is not to say that children deliberately “invent” situations. It is more likely that they tell their story in such a way as to elicit your empathy and therefore create an instantaneous feeling of intimacy. In short, it makes them feel loved by you. Many times I myself have witnessed a tearful camper on a call to a parent, full of desperate pleas to come home, only to see that same child ten minutes later having the time of his or her life with their friends at the waterfront or some similar activity. So, what to do? This is where you as a parent can make a powerful and enormously useful contribution.

First and foremost, let your child know that you love them and that you are confident in their ability to cope. (They may swear they can't, but stick to your guns. One of the best ways to love your child is to instill in them a confidence they will use the rest of their lives!) Second, remind

yourself that camp is a process and that the staff needs time to work with your child. Don't expect results overnight. Growing takes time. We don't get tomatoes tomorrow from seeds we plant today. Children are no different.

Third, think of suggestions that might be helpful to our staff in working with your child. Even though children may behave very differently at camp from anywhere else, you know them best. If you have an idea you think might help, share it with the appropriate person here at camp. After all, the results for your child will be better if we work together as partners. Fourth, encourage your child to share with their counselor (or Group Leader or whatever adult staff member they trust most) what they seem to be saving for you. Our staff can help your child much better if your child talks with us directly. Avoid the "triangle" that may be occurring where you, the parent, are one point; we the camp are a second point; and your child is the third point. Direct communication makes for better "tomatoes!"

All of this assumes, however, that you trust us to do what we have been practicing *for years* to do well –take the best possible care of your child while helping them grow. You have taken your time to carefully choose our camp and have familiarized yourself with who we are, so you must have developed a trust with us to take good care of your child. We take that trust seriously. Help us make our partnership match that trust.

Bob Ditter is a child and family therapist from Boston, Mass, who works extensively with people who work with children. He visits summer camps throughout the United States helping them be the best place possible for children.

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