

Not Back to School Camp

Camper & Parent Handbook 2025



Photo by Ethan B, Oregon 2024

Not Back to School Camp aspires to create a sanctuary

~that affirms, inspires, and mentors unschoolers..

~where campers and staff transform spiritually, emotionally, physically, creatively,
intellectually..

~where profound friendships begin and grow..

~and where adventure, mystery, music, wild spontaneous fun, and magic prevail.

About this Handbook

Dear campers (and parents),

Hello, and thanks for registering for Not Back to School Camp! We are excited to spend time learning with you and from you, and cooking up all kinds of goodness and adventure together.

This handbook is your main reference for before, during, and after camp. Please consult it for details on most aspects of NBTSC. You'll want to **download a copy** so it's handy when you're not signed into your account. Many campers **print** out some or all pages.

Besides this handbook, there will also be at least two **emails** that round out the “what to know and do before camp” essentials. In approximately June, you'll receive an email re our **Covid/health protocols** for this year. And approximately 2 or 3 weeks before your session begins, you'll receive an email with any **last minute changes** or updates, along with a few reminders and links to our pre-camp videos. Please watch for these emails—they'll be sent to all the authorized users on your online account—and check your spam folder if you don't see them.

Campers, please make sure your parents have access to a copy of this handbook—if you are the only person who normally logs into your online NBTSC account, they may not be fully aware of its existence. (Remind them to log in and download it for themselves.) It's important that your parents read it carefully—unless you are both 18+ and also taking absolutely full responsibility for everything related to NBTSC from travel to packing to finances and all the rest.

In the pages which follow, we try to address important questions you may have, and also to give you an idea of how camp works. Our intention is to make this a helpful and satisfying document for those folks who want to quickly find and read the essentials. **If you want more information**, or simply love details and context, please do also see the optional reading “NBTSC Camper Handbook Extras” available via the [“fine print”](#) page of our website. **If you are a new camper**, you may find these “extras” essential.

Some topics you'll find in the “extras” are

- new stuff for 2025 ~ some things that have changed since last year
- tobacco use (must read if you hope to use tobacco in any form, regardless of your age)
- lost and found details
- Spending money during camp (what to optionally bring cash/funds for)
- group singing (you can request or share songs!)
- hair (basically a heads up that campers often cut/color hair during nbtsc)
- staffer Brittney's extensive and awesome notes on staying healthy at camp
- fairy godparent (explanation of an activity that campers often initiate)
- the media at nbtsc (rarely a thing but just a heads up re possibilities)
- Our perspective re you sharing quasi-private information with us regarding specific campers
- NBTSC agreements—the long, more explanatory version

Even in this main handbook, some sections are more important than others. **Essential topics are *asterisked in the clickable table of contents—we count on everyone to be familiar with these aspects of NBTSC** (unless they apply only to a session you are not attending) and to prepare accordingly. Even if you (or your kids) have been to camp a trillion (or 5) times before, please make sure you are up to speed on these subjects.

If we haven't satisfied your curiosity, by all means, [contact us!](#)

We're looking forward to being with you soon!

Cheers,

Grace Llewellyn and the NBTSC admin team

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Nuts & Bolts



Photo by Skye P, Oregon 2022

*Your Online Account & Essential Emails

We work with an organization called CampDoc to process NBTSC registrations and to request and share information. Log into your account at any time using the “Login” tab on our website (nbtsc.org). You’ll receive emails (with the links you’ll need) prompting you as necessary. If you are confused, experience glitches, or have questions or concerns, don’t hesitate to get in touch with us!

Of crucial importance: **Make sure you *and* your parents have access to your online account**, and that **you and your parents are signed up as authorized users so that you receive our email notifications**, and then that **you and your parents actually read the emails we send** out.

Click the “manage users” button at the top of your account profile page to **add email addresses that you and your parents will actually check**.***We send **essential updates** before, during, and after camp, and it is of utmost importance that you and your parents read them.*** You can expect key details regarding our current-year health protocols as they develop in the months and weeks just before camp. We also use email to send important news and reminders regarding arrival day, our parent open houses, any updates to our snack policy (items not to bring when we have severely allergic campers, etc.), links to our orientation videos, and sometimes camp events such as prom, etc. On rare occasions there’s a significant change to some aspect of camp (such as due to a weather event) and we communicate that via email also. We don’t send a lot of emails but the ones we do send are important. They are not replicated anywhere on our website or social media accounts, since they are intended only for the current camper cohort. **Only the “authorized users” email addresses in your account will receive these notifications**. If your contact info changes, you must log in and update it. Our emails for current year campers do not go to other email addresses—such as the one(s) you provide for the camp directory, or the one(s) you’ve used to sign up for our public (MailChimp) mailing list.

Once more with feeling: *Our important updates go only to the email addresses listed as **authorized account users** in your online NBTSC account.*

Also please **make sure your email account understands** that our profound missives are **not spam!** Please check and adjust your spam filters so you don’t miss important communications. We send notifications out through CampDoc, and occasionally NBTSC staff/admins also send emails from their individual email addresses (Maya, Grace, and possibly others). In the past, some of our emails have landed in spam folders. (**Gmail** users, especially, have missed some of our key updates.)

Re marketing emails from CampDoc

CampDoc often sends marketing emails to authorized account users, with invitations to purchase a travel protection plan, custom labels for your stuff (to avoid losing personal items during camp), etc. Fear not ~ there is an opt-out option available (in the “footer” of the relevant sections), so if you don’t enjoy receiving these marketing emails, please feel free to opt out.

We request that you do not, however, mark such messages as “spam”—that can make our “real” emails also languish in spam folders. Thank you!



Photo by Blake Boles, Oregon 2022

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*What We Need From You & When We Need It

AKA Dates & Deadlines ~ here's your handy list.
Please doublecheck everything for completeness and accuracy.
Consider printing this section and using it as a checklist.

March 31

- **Early registration deadline**
 - To qualify: **register** online, pay your **deposit**, and complete your **camper application** within one week. (On April 1, tuition increases \$150 per session. If you missed the deadline, put it on your calendar for next year!)
- **Worktrade application deadline**

Within 1 week of registering: Camper Application

We need your complete Camper Application (at the top of your online account “Health and Pre-Camp Info” section) before we can finalize your registration. For context and guidance, see the [Camper Application page](#) (in this handbook), and also the [fine print page](#) of our website.

June 1 ~ tuition is due

The complete balance of your camp fees must be paid by June 1, unless we have agreed on a payment plan that includes later installments.

- Conveniently **pay online** via your NBTSC account—these transactions will appear on your credit card or bank statements from “DocNetwork, Inc.” (Ann Arbor, MI).
 - If you prefer to break your tuition into monthly payments, it's easy to set that up via CampDoc. If your monthly payments deduct from a bank account, you'll receive a discount ~ approx 2%. (We need to individually apply this discount, so you might not see it immediately.)
- Or, **mail a paper check or money order** to NBTSC, PO Box 2034, Joshua Tree, CA 92252. If mailed inside the U.S., postmarked by June 1 is fine. If mailed from outside the U.S., take the necessary steps for us to receive it by June 1.) If you can work with very specific parameters, there's a small discount for paying by check/MO—details on our [tuition \(etc.\) page](#).

optional (but extremely important for some!) June 1 deadlines

- [T Shirt design contest](#) entries due
- [Culmination requests](#) (via your online account)
- For Vermont: let us know if you are hoping we will provide **van** transportation from/to **Philly** and/or **Albany**. (We've occasionally arranged this in the past.) At the time of this writing we don't know whether we'll be able to offer it in 2025 ~ for a reasonable, affordable cost. But if there's a group of interested campers, we'll look into the possibilities.

July 1 ~ online information is due (everything except travel plans)

- **Bio and photo for the directory.** You'll upload these via your online account.
 - Campers and staff receive paper directories at camp. Tell us a little something about yourself! You can enter about 250 words—if you're not sure where to start, you might announce the workshop you're teaching, describe your interests or skills, proclaim your goals for NBTSC, share your pronouns, list your social media handles, etc. We don't proofread, so check your own spelling.
- Complete and e-sign your **health and pre-camp info** via your online account. This includes personal and health data, diet restrictions, authorizations, workshops you'd like to teach, cabin preferences, an opportunity to reserve and pay for T shirts, hoodies, field trips, etc.
- This handbook (elsewhere) contains further details regarding
 - your [health history](#) info
 - [dietary restrictions](#) questions
 - the [authorizations](#) section

Prescreening questions

- Oregon: July 17 - August 7
- Vermont: August 13- September 3

During the 3 weeks just before your session, you'll be prompted several times (via email) to check in online re your current health status, and describe the steps you are taking to show up on arrival day in radiant health. (There's no need to fill out the prescreening before the due dates, and we don't recommend doing so—because you'll just need to do it again during the required time windows.) See more under "[The Vitality Project](#)."

Travel info & travel reservations/payments

- Due for **Oregon July 20**
- Due for **Vermont August 15**

You'll be prompted for travel info in your online account. By this date you must also reserve and pay for any travel-related needs such as bus or van reservations. (But note that for Vermont, if you're interested in van transpo between NBTSC and **Philly** or **Albany**, you must reach out by **June 1**—and this may or may not be on offer for 2025.)

Approx 1-2 weeks before camp ~ watch orientation videos

You'll receive links via email. We need everybody to watch our short orientation video(s), which cover NBTSC agreements and possibly additional material. Please do watch them even if you've been to camp (or seen the videos) before! By handling some of our essential orientation content prior to gathering together, we cut down on the need for long meetings right at the start of camp. Also, this gives you and your family the opportunity to discuss and reflect on anything that's especially important, relevant, or challenging for you specifically.



Photo by Zoe Newmarco, Vermont 2019

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*What's your name?

We've asterisked this new section (meaning it's required reading) because at NBTSC there are many people who use a first name or nickname that's different from their legal first name. (Plus a few who go by a last name that's different from their legal last name.) We want to respect you by consistently using the name you prefer to be called. We also need your legal name in case of healthcare needs, emergencies, or logistical moments (such as if we talk with an airline regarding missing luggage). So, **this year we've made an important change** to the way that we ask for your name(s) via our registration process and your online account. **If your legal name is also the name that you want to be called in everyday life** (and during camp), and if you find the online account "name" questions user-friendly and straightforward, you're free to **skip the rest of this section**.

What's different this year, and why

When a camper first sets up an online account, and is prompted to enter their name, we now want you to provide your preferred name or nickname. We will use this name whenever possible. (In the past, the name associated with each account was the camper's legal name.)

We (NBTSC admins and staff) will see this name whenever we pull up your account. When we send you notifications or otherwise reach out to communicate with you or your parents, we'll use this name. This is the version of your name that will go in the camp directory. (All campers and staff receive a paper directory at camp.) All of our various lists at camp—advisee groups, people with dietary restrictions, superhero teams, cabin rosters, etc.—all those lists will use the name you provide here.

Do you need to change the name associated with your account?

If you've already signed up (this year or previously) with a name you're not using, no problem. All you need to do is submit a one-time name change request. To do this, log into your account. Near the top you'll see your name and the option to edit:



You'll choose "edit" and then submit your changes under "demographic changes." We (NBTSC admins) need to approve these requests individually, so the change won't happen instantaneously, but we'll get on it. (If we're confused we may reach out. Sometimes there is a lot of complexity re folks' names, and we want to get it right.)

Confused? When you log into your account, the name that you see right at the top (such as "Adorable Earthling" in the example above) is the name associated with your account. *If that's not what you want us to call you, please submit a change request.*

We still need your full legal name too

Legal names are essential in some logistical situations (like if we need to phone an airline re your missing luggage), and also in emergencies or if you need health care during camp at a local clinic.

So, you'll see that in the "General Information" part of the Health and Pre-Camp Info section, we ask about your legal name. There's also a question where you can explain anything else you want us to know about your name situation.

What about using a preferred name, but just during your camp session?

For more transient nicknames, or names that you might only want to use during camp (but not in the camp directory, or not when we're communicating with your family, etc.), you can tell us at camp what you want to be called. We're quite accustomed to rolling with temporary names and nicknames, and we'll do our best, and our best is usually pretty good. Still, we're humans with imperfect brains, and it's possible that we'd accidentally refer to you using the name that's listed on your account, in the directory, etc. It's also possible that while talking with others—such as when your uncle arrives to pick you up on the last morning of camp—we'd accidentally use your camp nickname. Again, people have a wide range of feelings connected to their names, and we realize that for some folks these things are no big deal. But for others they *are* a big deal so we want to be clear that 1) we do our best, and 2) our best may not be perfect.

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*the Camper Application

Here we address the important topic of whether NBTSC is likely to be a good fit for an individual. We don't want to scare you, and to keep this discussion in perspective we'll begin with a reality check: most campers have a great time! Virtually everybody experiences a few bumpy, lonely, or anxious moments—but, overall, most campers make friends, get excited about new things, and feel satisfied (or downright ecstatic) regarding their NBTSC experience. Still, it's very important that the decision to sign up for NBTSC is made with intention and good communication amongst all of us. We've already asked you to read and reflect on the [Fine Print page](#) of our website before registering, so this is basically Step 2 of our collective decision-making process.

When you register, you'll see that we ask a series of Camper Application questions at the top of the Health & Pre-Camp Info section of your online account. These questions require collaboration by **campers and parents***. It's important that you **answer completely and honestly**. No need to provide long or elaborate answers if there's nothing to disclose. But, please do not minimize or understate any challenges or concerns. We want to avoid a situation where we (the NBTSC staff) can't offer adequate support to campers, or where staffers don't have time to take care of their own needs. (In recent years, a few staffers have been so overextended that they haven't had time to eat or shower, let alone get enough sleep or participate in camp events.) We also just want to make sure we're all on the same page and that everybody coming to NBTSC truly wants to be there!

**Unless you're 18 or older, in which case you can answer the questions independently or collaborate with parents—you decide what best makes sense.*

By the time you're addressing these questions (and reading this handbook), you've already submitted a simple "registration" form and paid a deposit, but **your registration is not complete until we've approved your application**. So, it's important to **finish the application right away**.

You do have a **one-week grace period** between registering and completing your application questions. But after that: registrations with incomplete applications may not qualify for the early registration (March 31) tuition break. Some NBTSC assignments are first-come first-served (some cabin requests, some superhero team preferences, etc.)—and registrations must be complete before we can put you in those queues. If a session fills up, people with unfinished applications will be waitlisted. If summer rolls around and you still haven't finished your application, we'll remind you one last time and then we'll most likely cancel your registration without refunding your deposit. (By this time we will have done a fair amount of stressing over your missing application, sent a bunch of reminders, etc.) It's difficult for us to move forward on camp preparation when we're waiting on incomplete applications.

We carefully read your responses and get back to you. It might be a week (or maybe even two during peak registration periods)—we're reading a lot of applications and we want to give each our full attention. **These are the four possibilities:**

- **We approve your registration**
 - If it seems clear that NBTSC is likely to be a good fit for you this year, we'll approve your registration. We approve most registrations, so this is what happens for most people. You'll receive a simple notification via email. (If you're 19 or older, you will also need to fill out an older camper application. Maya will email you the older camper application after you begin the registration process.)
- **We need more information**
 - Sometimes a question isn't addressed as thoroughly as we need, or a person shares information that we have questions about. It's fairly common for us to ask for more details. We're not judging and we don't want to provoke any anxiety—we're just seeking to better understand your situation. We'll reach out, most likely via an email sent to all authorized users on your account. (But if you'd rather respond by phone, we can talk that way.) We might also ask you to fill out the "Camper Health History" section of your online account right away. After we understand more, we'll go from there.
- **We need a contingency plan**
 - If we feel that NBTSC is likely to be a challenging environment for you, and if we're not fully confident that our staff can reasonably support you, we may wholeheartedly welcome you to give camp a try as long as you and your parents submit a detailed, action-ready plan for how you can safely and promptly depart if needed. Of course we're going to hope that it works out to enjoy your company for the full session, but we'll be ready to celebrate whatever time we do get to have together—even if that turns out to be less than we all wished for. We may also need you to arrange permission for us to talk (if needed) with your doctor, therapist, psychiatrist, etc. If we ask for a contingency plan, we'll provide a framework for you to follow. If you don't want to submit a contingency plan, your registration will be canceled. As long as you have completed your camper application promptly (within a week of registering), we will refund your deposit and any additional tuition or fees you've already paid.
- **We decide that for some reason, we are not able to host you this year**
 - On rare occasions, even with a backup exit plan, we're not confident that we can provide what a camper needs. We don't come to this conclusion often, but we never want to jeopardize safety by inviting a person into a high-risk situation. As long as you have completed your camper application promptly (within a week of registering), we'll refund your deposit and any additional tuition/fees you've paid.

What if things change for you between now and camp time, or you later share new information about challenges you are facing?

We understand that things change, and we don't see the application process as the be-all-and-end-all of deciding together whether NBTSC is likely to be a good fit for you. Please do contact us right away if there are changes to your situation. **(But please don't change your application responses** after we approve your registration; just reach out to us and we can communicate via email, phone, or text.)

What if we approve your application, and don't ask for a contingency plan, but then it turns out that you have a hard time at camp and we're not able to offer the support you need?

The application process is helpful, but of course it can't predict with complete accuracy who is going to have a challenging time at NBTSC. When a camper has unexpected difficulty, and if we start seriously wondering whether it's feasible to continue hosting them, we reach out to parents. For example, if a staffer needs to stay up really late one night because you are feeling extremely anxious, the next day we would probably touch base with parents and ask that a contingency departure plan be developed immediately. Then we could continue to play it by ear, do what we reasonably can to support you in having a great time, and hope for the best—while being ready to pivot if needed.

That said, the very first night (sometimes the first two nights) of each session do tend to be the most challenging. We don't necessarily worry if a person has a hard time at the start of camp. We understand that people may be exhausted from traveling (and changing time zones), and we know that it can be overwhelming to drop suddenly into an intense community of 60-130 new people. We begin each session with a lot of supports ready to activate if needed—small, cozy, facilitated conversation circles for people feeling homesick or overwhelmed, staffers at the ready with tea and snacks and silly games and quiet activities for those who might want to feel more connected but don't necessarily want the pressure to talk with others, etc.

Usually by around the second evening these initial challenges have subsided. If a person is still really struggling at that point, that's when we normally start to consider whether a backup plan is needed, and bring parents into the conversation. Of course, if a person experiences *extreme* discomfort at the start of camp, that's another matter, and we're likely to start talking with parents right away.

In any kind of extreme difficulty, a parent/guardian must be ready to do whatever is necessary to facilitate a safe departure—even if that means immediately and personally traveling to camp.

If we need to put an exit plan into action

Occasionally we conclude that we simply do not have the resources to ethically host a camper—and the individual needs to depart so they have access to their parents and/or others who can best support them. If this happens, it's not that we don't care about you, and we're not judging you, and you're not in trouble! We just literally can't do it sometimes. Or we can't do it without seriously jeopardizing staffers' health and neglecting our other responsibilities—that is, dropping the ball where other campers' needs are concerned. We'll see what we can do to help you create closure, and if time allows, we'll offer the opportunity to say goodbye to everyone in a meeting (if you'd like). Although these decisions can be disappointing, they can also bring relief, and there is typically a lot of mutual appreciation expressed for the time we've been blessed to share together.

Do please be aware that we cannot refund tuition when a camper needs to depart early.

We often share Camper Applications with our senior staff team

We've found that this type of context and detail helps our staff to better understand and support campers. (But we don't normally share this information with the junior staff team, unless there is a specific "need to know" situation.)

About the application signature section

We need all campers, plus parents/guardians of minor campers, to agree on a few key conditions which are spelled out in the signature section. Here's a bit of additional context.

We need signed affirmation that Part 1 of the application does in fact reflect the camper's perspective (as opposed to a parent's). A high percentage of the problems we have at NBTSC arise with campers who don't genuinely want to be present. A too-common scenario is that a parent writes a deceptive application and sends the kid to NBTSC in hopes that our camp culture (of openness, generosity, kindness, authenticity, excitement about learning and growing, etc.) will turn their kid into a more open, generous, kind, authentic, excited person. It doesn't usually work that way! In fact, these campers often undermine our culture in a way that makes camp less inspiring, relaxed, and safe for others, and it's not uncommon for us to send them home. (On the other hand, when a *camper* hopes that NBTSC will help them reinforce how they want to be, and let go of not-so-great patterns in their life, that's another matter and real transformation can certainly happen.)

Parents/guardians affirm that they'll communicate with us respectfully

We have high standards for how we treat one another at NBTSC, and this extends not only to interactions among staff, campers, and site staff, but also between parents and others in our community. It's been extremely rare for us to experience bullying parents, but due to a couple traumatic occasions when it has happened, we want to share some boundaries at the outset. An example of something we'd consider bullying or disrespectful is when a parent takes issue (during camp) with something that has been clearly spelled out on our website and in this handbook (such as the fact that we offer all-gender cabins, or the fact that

campers may use the bathrooms that best align with their self-determined genders) and then repeatedly harasses us via phone and text, threatens to sue us, etc. Of course we *don't* consider it bullying or disrespectful when a parent is concerned about something they've heard about camp and wants to talk with us about it. We welcome conversations about hard topics, and if some big feelings (including anger, frustration, or alarm) are expressed that's okay. But we don't tolerate bullying. When a parent bullies us, as much as we hate for the camper to pay the price, we do reserve the right to cancel a registration, send the camper home from camp (with a parent taking full responsibility for prompt and safe departure), ban the camper from future participation (at least until they are a legal adult), or set any other boundaries we choose.



Photo by Blake Boles, Oregon 2022

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*Tuition, merch, & all things financial

General notes & reminders

You can view the exact amount you owe us (for camp tuition plus anything miscellaneous like T-shirts or airport shuttle rides) anytime in the “account” section of your online NBTSC account. Unless you’ve set up a monthly payment plan, all camp tuition is due June 1 (or immediately, if you register later than June 1). We do need to charge a \$35 fee if tuition is late.

Please be familiar with our [refund policy](#)

to prevent misunderstanding and frustration for everyone, thank you.

You’ll have the opportunity to purchase a “protection plan” (insurance) via CampDoc

You’ll see this when you’re logged into your account—you can opt for emergency medical insurance, travel insurance, etc. We know little about this product and can neither advise you for nor against it. We do know that some camp families would prefer more peace of mind and assurance than our own refund policy can provide for, so we want this option to be available for any who so choose. NBTSC has no financial relationship with the protection plan. We are pleased with our overall experience in working with CampDoc, but are not in a position to specifically endorse this plan.

Work trades

See details on our [worktrade web page](#). The **application deadline is March 31st** and we are strict about it—except that **sometimes we still need lifeguards after the deadline** so if you are a certified lifeguard it’s okay to check in with us later.

BIPOC diversity scholarships available

This is primarily a Vermont program, but we also have a few scholarships available in Oregon.

We believe NBTSC will become a better place for everyone as it continues to grow more racially diverse. We are therefore seeking ways to make NBTSC more welcoming to, and inclusive of, folks of diverse racial backgrounds. (One piece of that is that we’re always seeking BIPOC staffers who are a good fit for NBTSC—so if you know someone who might be a match please tell them about us! If they’re interested, we hope they’ll be in touch.) We also offer a “diversity scholarship” program. If you are (or know) a potential BIPOC camper who might have a hard time paying for camp, don’t hesitate to let them know about this opportunity! There is no deadline to apply for these scholarships—but, our funds are limited and the scholarships are basically first come first served, so we recommend getting in touch sooner rather than later.

Photo from Vermont 2018

How to order merch, shuttle rides, etc. ~ accessing our “add-on” system

When you first register for camp you’ll see the option to purchase “add-ons”—T-shirts, hoodies, a copy of Grace’s revised *Teenage Liberation Handbook*, bus rides, the Vermont early-arrival work party, etc. Later, people often want to make changes but don’t know how to get back into that portal. In your online account, just go to the “registration” tab and click on the relevant session (“Camper Oregon” or “Camper Vermont”). You should then be able to select or change add-ons to your heart’s content.

More on our website!

See our [tuition details](#) page for additional information on

- our three-tier tuition system
 - By the time you are reading this handbook, you may have already determined which tier makes sense for your family, but if not, that tuition details page offers guidelines. Feel free to [reach out](#) if you need to make changes to your tuition tier and are running into obstacles.
- sibling discount
- multiple session discount

Payment options

You can pay through your online account, set up a payment plan (also through your account), or mail us a paper check (or money order).

Paying online

This should be straightforward when you're logged into your account. Note that if you set up a payment plan that deducts from a bank account, we'll apply a discount of approximately 2%. (This may not show up immediately since we need to personally apply your discount.) Payments will show up as "DocNetwork, Inc." (Ann Arbor, MI)" on your bank or credit card statement.



Photo from Vermont 2024

Checks or Money orders

Make 'em out to *Not Back To School Camp*. (Please make sure your check isn't going to bounce. We must charge \$35 for NSF checks.) Like any other NBTSC postal mail, checks/MOs go to NBTSC, PO Box 2034, Joshua Tree, CA 92252.

We offer a small discount for checks (or money orders) for campers paying full tuition (any tier) if you are able and willing to meet the following criteria:

- Your initial \$250 deposit can be paid either online or via check or money order.
- The remainder of your tuition must be paid via just one check or money order, and it must be on time. That means postmarked (in the U.S.) by June 1 if mailed from within the U.S., or received by June 5 if mailed from outside the U.S.
 - If you register later than June 1 then the balance of your tuition must be **both** postmarked (in the U.S.) within 3 days of your registration (or received by us within 1 week of registration if mailed from outside the U.S.) **and** received by us no later than 3 weeks prior to the start of your session. (Sorry, no discount for registrations that are so late that these dates are impossible.)
 - Sorry, the discount is not available to worktrade or scholarship recipients.
 - NSF checks don't qualify for the discount. (They also result in a \$35 additional charge.)

Details

- The discount is \$55 for Oregon, \$45 for Vermont. The discount is the same across all tuition tiers.
- Extra items such as T-shirts, hoodies, bus or van reservations, etc., can be paid online or via check — this won't affect your discount.
- You can do the math and deduct the discount from your final payment, or we can apply it to other items such as T shirts.

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*Health information

You'll encounter a required health section as part of your online account. This provides helpful information to camp staff and/or medical personnel in case of a health problem or emergency. Also, if you have any kind of special need or mental health condition that might pose a challenge for you at camp, *require significant support from staff*, or *impact others negatively*, you must let us know clearly. We may want to talk with you and/or your parents ahead of time, too. In these situations, ignorance is not bliss for anyone—the camper involved, the staff, or other campers. We are not staffed to support every type of need, and we may determine together that NBTSC is not the right fit at this time. (See our [fine print](#) web page and the [Camper Application](#) section of this handbook for more.)

Important: if you've already told us something about your health (in your camper application, informally, verbally, in an email, at camp last year, etc.), you still need to *also* share it via your online health section. This is our primary reference anytime a camper has a health problem. It must be thorough and complete.

You absolutely may not attend NBTSC if you don't provide complete health history information.

You'll see that we ask whether it's okay to offer alternative health remedies

In the "Over the Counter Medications" section of your online health profile, you'll be asked about essential oils, homeopathics (such as arnica), aloe, vitamins/nutritional supplements, etc. Our longtime health-support staffer in Oregon (a layperson and the mother of 3 NBTSC alumni) wants you to know that she brings a select few, research-supported supplements across these categories, purchased from established health food stores and Young Living Essential Oils company, to conservatively share, as needed and/or requested by individual campers requesting extra support for specific, minor needs not requiring formal medical attention, and/or for virus-prevention and immune system boosting. (While that information comes from Oregon staff, similar remedies may be offered in Vermont.) At the bottom of that section there's a space for you to add clarifications or notes.

Please upload a copy of your insurance card (front & back), and provide accurate, complete insurance info. We require all campers to have medical insurance.

Although it's rare for a camper to need medical attention during camp, it does happen. When it does, things are exponentially easier and faster when this information is clear and complete. When it's not, there can be long frustrating waits and lots of phone calls. Please doublecheck.

If needed, you can purchase the "Protection Plan" from CampDoc, via your online NBTSC account, which includes coverage for emergency medical expenses. We don't know enough about this product to recommend it—nor to recommend against it—but it is convenient to purchase.

Concerns?

Some families limit their use of conventional medicine, and thus find some of our health history questions challenging.

Occasionally we have a camp family who chooses to avoid conventional medicine even in some urgent or emergent situations, and so they prefer not to sign the healthcare authorization as it is written. If that is true for you, please contact Maya. You will most likely need to provide a detailed letter, spelling out what sort of situations you are willing to have handled medically, etc. Any stipulations you request will be shared with NBTSC admins and possibly other staff. Occasionally a family makes requests we are not comfortable with, and if this is the case we may not be able to host you at this time.



Photo by Max V, Oregon 2022

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*Notes on authorizations & insurance

Whenever anybody has a health issue at camp, boring things like authorizations and insurance (as well as health history and dietary restrictions information) suddenly jump into the spotlight and become very exciting, in either a good way or a bad way. It's WAY EASIER for campers to get health care (in local clinics, emergency rooms, etc.) when we have complete information about their health insurance (including readable copies of the front and back of insurance cards). We do require all campers to have medical insurance, even if it's just a temporary solution such as the "Protection Plan" offered by CampDoc via your online NBTSC account.

Also, we're noticing a tension between—on the one hand: the fact that we ourselves (NBTSC directors and staff) vastly prefer a free range world where children and teenagers run and play and romp wildly and safely use knives and climb trees and swim and navigate through wilds and cities.... and then the other hand: the fact that many youth simply are not experienced enough in such pursuits to engage them safely. "Safely" meaning, of course, without any guarantees but with some good skills up their sleeves and the wisdom to avoid unnecessary risks, to respond to Situations smartly, and to not do rash things in hopes of impressing their peers. So we find ourselves adding things (like tree climbing at Camp Myrtlewood) that we require parents to sign authorizations for—not because we want to discourage them, but because these are not one-size-fits-all activities and we don't know all of our campers well enough to assess individually whether they have good skills and maturity for stuff like this. We figure parents are in a better position than we are to make those judgment calls.

You will encounter the following sections as you fill out your online profile. Some of them mention "The Melting Point, Inc.," which is the simple corporation associated with NBTSC.

Insurance (and waivers/authorizations)

Note that the liability insurance we carry at some sessions requires an oddly-worded waiver with seemingly irrelevant language about "coaches," athletic events," and such. It is important that you have your own medical insurance that meets your needs. In addition to uploading your insurance documentation, we require that you (and your parents unless you're 18+) sign a statement affirming that you take responsibility for your own health and medical expenses.

Hiking and field trips (and authorizations)

Most of the available hiking trails are outside the boundaries of the sites that we rent, and you (plus your parents if you're under 18) must sign an authorization for you to be allowed to hike. This may also include simple off-site excursions like blackberry picking, going for a walk up the road, visiting swimming holes just up the creek, etc. Generally, we allow people to walk or hike unsupervised during the daytime, and at night with special permission (usually only in groups with at least one person we trust to be a nighttime leader). These adventures are typically an enriching part of the camp experience and we don't want to raise any alarm about them, we just want parents to consider what is appropriate in their case.

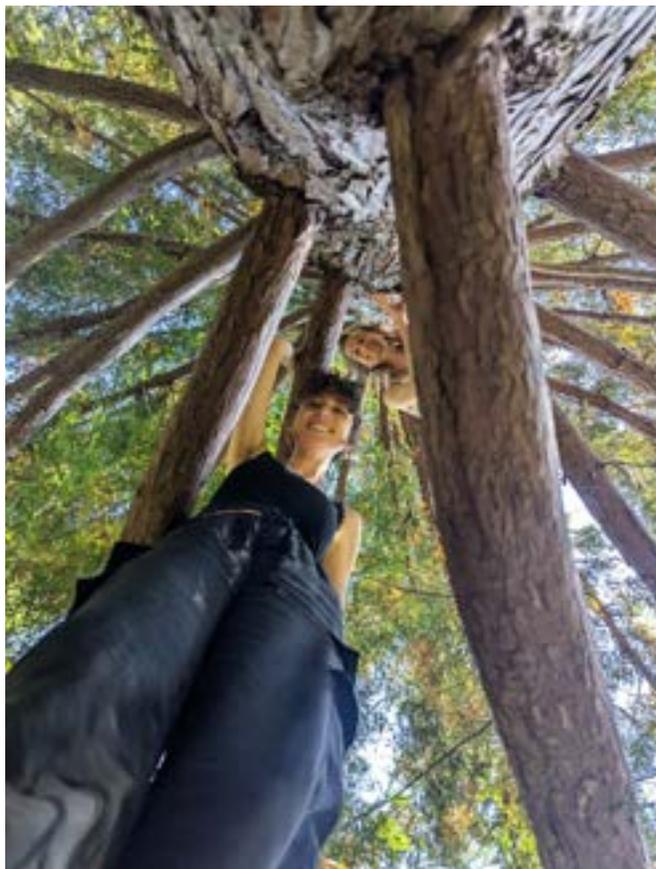
Similarly, if you go on our field trips (such as in Oregon to the coast), we require a signed authorization for those trips as well. The Oregon field trip requires you to affirm that you will respect any "no swimming" rules set by staff—most of Oregon's stretch of the Pacific Ocean is cold and dangerous compared to parts of the Atlantic, Caribbean, etc., that campers may be familiar with. (Playing and wading near the edge is usually okay, as is going on long walks on the gorgeous beach.)

Occasionally campers with parental permission have a spontaneous opportunity to go on a short field trip. For instance, in Oregon, a couple carloads of Oregon campers and staff sometimes explore nearby waterfalls and swimming holes.

Photo from Oregon 2024

Oregon tree climbing authorization

Camp Myrtlewood is blessed with many beautiful old trees. At some sessions of camp, campers get excited about climbing them—most often, one specific very tall Coast Redwood. We have never had an accident, but staff often observes that if someone were to fall, the consequences could be bad—falling from a significant height, hitting sharp branches on the way down, etc. Recently staff has suggested that we require parental permission as a gateway to allow climbing. No, we do not see ourselves as part of the mega-movement to keep people indoors,



seatbelted, and coated in scratch-resistant polyurethane. But we do see a wide range of campers excitedly (and sometimes rapidly) scaling that tall redwood, and while some of them climb with the agility of spiderman or at least what seems to be good clear judgment, others look like they're ascending on the fumes of inspiration and sleeplessness. We figure parents know their kids better than we do, are better equipped to assess skills and (even more importantly) their kids' current capacity for good judgment regarding physical risks. As with hiking, tree climbing has been an enriching part of the camp experience for a lot of people and we don't want to raise any alarm about it. Most NBTSC staff are enthusiastic proponents of tree climbing and other adventures—we just want parents to consider what is appropriate in their case.

Video & photo release

We generally require that campers (and their parents) give their permission to be included in published photos and videos. This is standard procedure at many summer camps, and it's too difficult to keep track of one or two campers who might prefer not to be included. The most common way we use camp photos is simply on our website (mainly in the photo albums we post for each session). (You might also want to know that many campers and staff post their NBTSC photos and videos on social media. We do not attempt to regulate these postings, and they are vastly appreciated by many in our community.) If you see a photo of you online that you don't like, let us know and we can most likely take it down or at least crop or blur you out.

Less commonly, we put the releases to more excellent use. In 2009, camper alum Allen Ellis came to 2 sessions of NBTSC and created a [beautiful film](#).



Photo by Graham E, Vermont 2024

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*What to Bring & What Not to Bring

plus some general notes on packing, shipping, lost and found, etc.

Less is more. Some campers (especially those arriving by car) bring way too much stuff, making it impossible to keep things organized and accessible in their cabins. You do not need a complete set of clean clothes for each day.

Except when more is more. Laundry facilities are not available except during our 2 week session in Oregon, so do bring socks for the whole session and extras for when it rains. **Consider erring on the side of overkill** when it comes to warm clothes and bedding, especially for Vermont—but for Oregon too if you might want to sleep outside sometimes (which many people do, and which offers an opportunity for communal sleeping space).

People attending 2-week sessions (currently just **Oregon**) have one (optional) mid-session **opportunity to have their clothes washed**. (There is no extra fee for this service. We normally use scent-free detergent.) We suggest you bring a large zipping mesh bag (such as an extra-large lingerie- or sweater-laundering bag) that can hold all your laundry loosely in both the washer and dryer. You will not be present while your clothes are washed (at a huge laundromat in a nearby town) but they will be kept together in a batch with 1-3 other people's clothes. A zipping mesh bag can help make sure everything easily comes back to you. We wash everything together and cannot separate out delicates, whites, etc.—good idea to pack (and launder) only sturdy items. Heavy items like jeans may not be 100% dry by the time they come back to camp.

Label your important possessions, big and small, with your complete name. We suggest that you make a list of everything you bring, and use it as a checklist before leaving camp. NBTSC assumes no responsibility for lost, stolen, rotted, jammed-into-the-crack-between-the-bed-and-the-wall, or otherwise disappeared items. (If you ask, we can keep cash and other small, important items locked in a relatively safe place.)

Lost & Found ~ If you get home and realize you forgot something, do reach out promptly. We hang onto left-behinds for just 3 weeks after each session. More details in the “NBTSC Camper Handbook Extras,” accessible via our [fine print](#) page.

You likely won't want to wear clothes specifically made for “camping”—most of us **wear “normal” clothes** most of the time. (But you do also need the solid outdoor gear about which we so often pontificate!) Some first-year campers wish they'd brought more **fun, special clothes**.

Occasionally, campers **ship luggage to our site** to save on airline baggage fees or just to make travel day easier. This is usually OK, but sometimes only within certain dates or other parameters. **Please check in** with us before making arrangements.

If you're traveling by air or public transit, pack **medications and other essentials in your carry-on bag** in case your checked baggage is lost. (It has happened.)

What about your phone?

This is mainly directed to Oregon campers (especially those with Verizon plans), since cell phones don't normally work at Farm & Wilderness in Vermont.

To optimize your camp experience and connect more fully with the NBTSC community, we suggest that you consider leaving your phone at home or asking us to stash it away during camp (in a lockbox or the locked trunk of a car). Or at least plan to keep your phone off and in airplane mode, perhaps in a zipped pocket in the bottom of a backpack or tote bag. (So it's there if you need it, but not running your brain from your hand or pants pocket.) Just plan ahead for these:

- *camera* ~ if you like to take pictures, bring a camera or plan to get your phone out intentionally, at specific times
- *timekeeping* ~ many campers bring an inexpensive watch, a fitbit (or similar), and/or for heavy sleepers, a simple vibrating alarm clock
- *note taking* ~ pocket-sized paper notebook still does the trick
- *flashlight* ~ just bring an actual flashlight or headlamp.

Re other valuables—see below under “what not to bring.”

Weather

Below, a few notes on what we've experienced and what we expect. (Checking the extended forecast is a good idea also.) People who don't take our advice about bringing warm stuff often regret it.

Oregon (Camp Myrtlewood)

It's usually hot/warm in the day, cool-to-cold at night, and it rains occasionally. Nights and mornings can be chilly—bring a *warm* sleeping bag, cozy sweats, toasty sweater, warm hat, and a warm, waterproof jacket (or a separate raincoat and fleece). You may enjoy a hot water bottle, too. (It doesn't usually get as cold at night as in Vermont, but the general Vermont advice—below—still applies. And the warmer your bedding, the more pleasant it is to sleep outside if you decide you want to.)

Vermont

It's likely to be warm during daytimes, cold at night (low 40s; though we've had a few nights in the low 30s), and it may rain.

You absolutely *must* bring very warm bedding, a warm coat, and a warm hat. Even though nighttime temperatures don't usually dip below the 30s, many people aren't actually warm enough in a sleeping bag that is rated for the temperature they are sleeping in. **We recommend a bag rated for 20° F** or colder, made by a reputable company. (You might do a little research on "sleeping bag temperature ratings.") We also suggest cozy sweats, a toasty sweater or fleece jacket, and a hot water bottle. Cabins are not heated—in fact, they are completely open on one side, with only three walls, built for summer.

If you bring adequate supplies there is no need for you to be cold at night.

Having said all that: **we have sometimes experienced unseasonably warm weather during our Vermont session.**

Additionally, we now run camp a couple weeks earlier in September than when we first wrote the above guidance. With the climate changing, we can no longer predict with near-certainty that you'll need cold-weather supplies, but we still think it's smartest to pack with long-term weather patterns in mind.

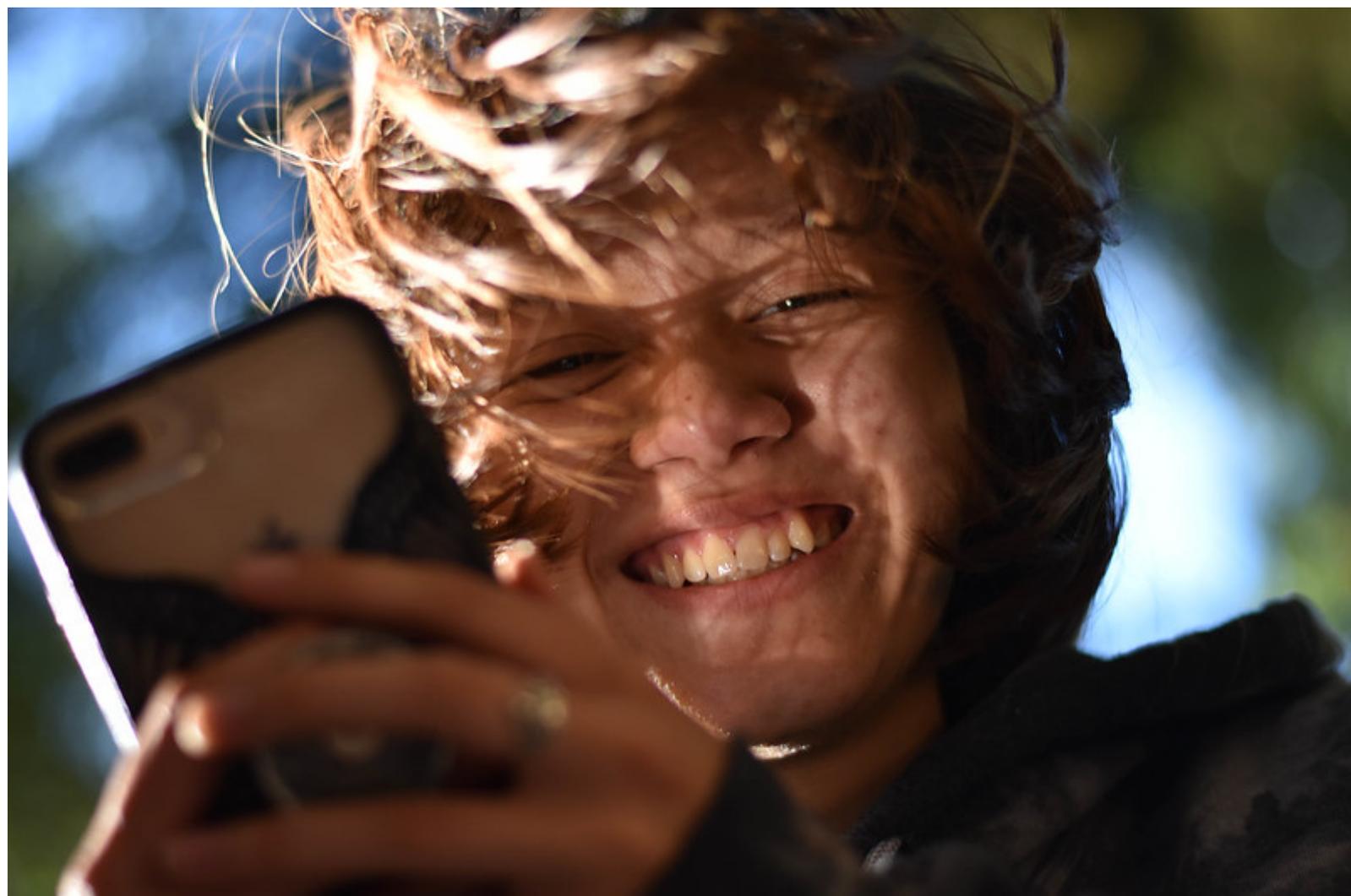


Photo by Skye P, Oregon 2022

*packing checklist

We suggest printing these pages

Essentials

Each camper needs most of these items. Think through the list and pack what makes sense for you.

__**shirts**: T-shirts, tank tops, etc.

__comfortable **pants** (and perhaps shorts)

__stretchy or loose **clothing for yoga, dancing, relaxing**, etc.

__something to wear to **prom**, especially if you want to dress in theme. (See the [Prom page](#).)

__other fun or **festive clothing** for special occasions (talent show, art show, closing ceremony, etc.)

__**socks** (including Smartwool or similar for hiking)

__**underwear**

__**closed-toe shoes, essential for everyone**. Flip-flops won't suffice for kitchen chores, partner dance workshops, and other key moments. Many campers bring **athletic shoes** for sports and hiking.

__**sandals or flip flops** (for nice weather, and/or to wear in the shower)

__**swimsuit**

__**hat** to keep the sun off you, also to keep ticks off while hiking

__**warm hat** (for cool mornings and evenings, also great for sleeping when it's cold)

__**warm long pants and/or sweats**

__cozy **sweater, hoodie, or fleece**

__**jacket or coat** (not just a light jacket—bring something toasty)

__1 or 2 **towels** & a washcloth.

__**bedding** ~ a sleeping bag, and a pillow if you need one. Or blankets and sheets. A mattress or sleeping pad is provided; the rest is up to you. For Oregon, bring something substantial; for Vermont, something extra substantial. (See "[weather](#)" above.) **You must have your own bedding** ~ at some sessions there may be public areas for group sleeping (usually outdoors or semi-outdoors), but each camper sleeps in their own bedding.

__**flashlight**—essential for all sessions for nighttime safety and courtesy. Make sure you have plenty of batteries, and/or a backup flashlight. It's ideal to bring a dedicated flashlight, separate from your phone, so you have the option to unplug.

Flashlights are particularly crucial in Vermont. Without one, you have no way of seeing anything in your cabin at night—no electricity, and you're likely to injure yourself while walking on the steep paths. They're also essential in Oregon, such as for walking to the restroom in the middle of the night, or retrieving something from your suitcase (without turning on the overhead lights and disturbing your cabin-mates).

__**water bottle**—labeled with your full name—important for general hydration, bus rides, hiking, and preventing germ sharing.

__**notebook** or clipboard—something you'll enjoy for taking notes. A pocket-sized notebook is good for keeping track of your plans for each day (workshops to attend, lunch meetings, etc.). If you might attend a writing workshop, consider a larger spiral notebook also. Of course some people just take notes on their phone but we suggest a paper option too, so you're not dependent on electronics.

__**thermos**. One of our staff nurses says we should make a thermos quasi-mandatory, and that carrying around hot tea or broth and drinking it regularly can make a huge difference for people fighting or recovering from sickness.

__**daypack**, for hiking and for carrying stuff with you during the day. (If you're sure you won't be hiking, a tote bag works too.)

__**toiletries**—shampoo, soap, toothpaste/brush, hairbrush/comb, lip balm, fingernail clippers, etc. (Please avoid strong smelling spray deodorants, colognes, and hair sprays and such. When necessary, at least plan to apply them outside rather than inside cabins, bathrooms, and shower buildings.)

__**extra menstrual supplies**, if you menstruate or might start. Lots of people who don't expect their periods during camp do get them, since their bodies sync up with others. We bring emergency supplies, but not always enough to meet the desperate demand. Plus, we figure you'd rather have your own brand, size, etc. rather than be stuck with what we've got.

__**insect repellent** (the need varies, but nice to have in case)

__**sunscreen** —helpful in general, but an absolute **MUST** for Oregon coast field trip participants

__**any medications**, in original prescription bottle, with your name and instructions (time intervals and dosage) clearly readable. We collect most medications (and some OTC meds) and keep them in a central, secure place to comply with state laws. Staff dispenses medications as needed. (Medications must also be listed in the health information that you submit via your online account prior to camp.)

__masks—two or more, N95s or similar, in case there are specific times or places during your session that masking is needed.

__sanitizer—pocket sized bottle. We stock communal spaces with large bottles, but it's good to keep a personal stash on hand—and also good for travel days.

__vitamins, supplements, etc. that help keep your immune system strong (see more under "[the vitality project](#)").

__remedies that you normally use to treat simple illnesses and symptoms. If there's a tea, a tincture, a salve, etc. that you turn to when you are congested, have a headache, cramps, sore throat, or allergies—good idea to bring it. (*Except please don't bring your own supply of acetaminophen, ibuprofen, benadryl, etc.—see below under "what not to bring."*)

__small amount of healthy snacks that do not need to be refrigerated—not essential for most people, but some campers consider them a necessity. Communal snacks are occasionally available, in addition to three hearty meals daily. Some campers bring a personal stash so they can have access to food at any time, or for when they don't like what's being served. Often, snacks must be stored in a public space rather than in cabins (to avoid rodent problems)—**space is limited, so bring a relatively small amount of dense foods**—think nuts or energy bars rather than bags of pre-popped popcorn.

- Prior to each session of camp, we review the lineup of dietary allergies presented by the campers and staff who'll be present. In some cases involving severe allergies, we may both exclude specific foods from our menu and also ask that people not bring snacks containing that food. **If there are restrictions, you'll hear from us around 3 weeks prior** to your session.
- *A parent suggests:* If it's your **first time at NBTSC** and you're not super-experienced at being away from home on your own, you may want to pack a **comforting homemade snack or treat especially for the first night**. "*Something familiar can go a long way.*"

__your parents' (and other emergency contacts') phone numbers (and email addresses?) memorized by your brain as well as by your phone or other gadgets.

__debit card or other ready access to cash (essential for food purchases during your trip to and from camp, as well as in case of travel emergencies or delays; also in case you need to visit a health clinic or pay for a prescription while you're at camp).

__A checklist of everything you're bringing

__flexibility

__150% of yourself



photo by Reanna Alder, Oregon 2012

Other stuff that could come in handy

__ **packing cubes** or other supplies for keeping your stuff organized. There's very little space in most cabins, so a good system makes a huge difference.

__ **timekeeper**. Although few people wear a watch in regular daily life, lots of NBTSC folk get an inexpensive one just for camp. Yes, you can carry a phone around, but many campers appreciate the opportunity to unplug. We do ring bells at the start and end of events, and there are clocks hanging in public spaces, but for many it's helpful to have a personal device for tracking clock-time.

__ **phone**—may be needed for travel days, but won't work much at camp except Verizon in Oregon. See more notes above, "What about your phone?"

__ **pens/pencils**. Consider bringing at least one good writing/drawing utensil. If you might keep a journal, compose poetry or love letters for your fairy godchild, sketch your cabin mates, or attend a writing workshop, it's nice to have a smoothly rolling pen or a splendid pencil that you enjoy using. (Plan ahead for how you will not lose it and will keep it with you. Some people attach a pen to a string and wear it around their neck. Labeling it with your name is not overkill.) We supply plenty of inexpensive pens for necessities, but they're not optimal for anything beyond writing your name on your directory or signing out to go on a hike.

__ two **epi-pens**, if you are a person who sometimes (or potentially) needs or uses an epi-pen. (If you don't have two, *get them* and bring them.) Our outdoor environment, with the potential for insect stings, plant allergens, etc., is as likely a place as ever for you to need one handy. You can keep one with you, and we will keep the other with our central first aid supplies as a backup.

__ two **inhalers** if you have a relevant health condition—especially for Oregon. Since there is always the potential for wildfire smoke to drift into our area, it's best to be prepared. You can keep one with you and we can keep the other with our first aid supplies as a backup.

__ **supplies for the workshop(s)** you'll teach

__ whatever you need for your **talent show performance**

__ Your **artwork** for our [art show](#) ~ something you made, drew, painted, calligraphed, sculpted, designed, patched, knitted, welded, carved, etched... and that isn't so precious you'd be devastated if something happened to it.

__ That fabulous **short film you made**, for our NBTSC [film festival](#). Ideally you remembered to email us about it before camp, but just bring it (like on a thumb drive) even if you didn't.

__ a **fidget toy**, if you like fidget toys, to calm your mind and occupy your hands during meetings, etc.

__ **rain jacket** (not needed at every session but we occasionally get a good drenching)

__ **rain boots** (same)

__ **umbrella**—particularly in Vermont, people sometimes wish they had one (like at night when carrying bedding from cabins to group sleeping space)

__ **long underwear** (mainly in Vermont)

__ **sunglasses** (especially in Oregon if you're going on the coast field trip)

__ **mirror**—for people really into grooming, it would help if you would bring your own mirror, particularly to Oregon, so that the bathroom sinks are accessible to those who just want to brush teeth or wash hands. (And in Vermont, mirrors are scarce anyway.)

__ a few **small, familiar, comforting items** (such as a favorite giant mug to carry a constant supply of hot tea)

__ **camera**

__ **hot water bottle** or other securely closing non-breakable container you can fill with hot water and take to bed (makes a huge difference on cold nights in Vermont, or sleeping outdoors in Oregon)

__ good **earplugs**

__ **vibrating alarm clock** (recommended for heavy sleepers)—we have a wake-up call shortly before breakfast, but a few people sleep through it. (**Your alarm must be non-disturbing** to others, i.e. a vibrating device rather than an ear-splitting device.)

__ **sketchpad**

__ **journal**

__ **games** to share

__ a hand drum, guitar, or other **musical instrument**

__ **frisbees** (label with your name!)

__ **wading shoes** (for creek or ocean)

__ **stamped postcards**, or **stamps/paper/envelopes**.

__ a small amount of **extra cash** (\$25 should do it) for miscellaneous options like an extra T shirt

__ For Oregon, a **tent**—if we have agreed you will be bringing and sleeping in one. (Let us know you're interested via your online account.) More details on our [Oregon sleeping arrangements](#) page.

__ For Oregon, consider a **sleeping pad or outdoor mattress** if you'll be tenting or if you're excited about sleeping under the stars. More details on our [Oregon sleeping arrangements](#) page.

_For Oregon, large (preferably zipping) mesh **laundry bag**, lingerie bag, or sweater bag—for optional midsession laundry service (see notes [above](#))

_For Vermont, an inexpensive **mosquito net** for sleeping. It's quite unlikely you'd need this, but in 2023 there were a lot of mosquitoes due to unusual flooding, so now it's on our "maybe in unusual circumstances" list. The 3-sided cabins offer no protection from insects.

If you sign up for the Oregon coast field trip, consider

- _an extra towel
- _strong sunscreen (sunburns are common on this trip)
- _shoes in which you can walk/hike on damp rocks
- _a windbreaker

What not to bring

_ **illegal substances** (alcohol, marijuana, and the rest)

_ **tobacco** (in any form), **unless** your parents have signed our tobacco use form (or you are 18+). Regardless of age, read the page on tobacco use in the "NBTSC Camper Handbook Extras," accessible via our [fine print](#) page. We have significant and serious rules and restrictions around tobacco use.

_ Sometimes we ask folks not to bring **snacks containing specific foods** (such as peanuts), if there will be campers or staff present who have severe allergies. If this applies to your session, we'll let you know by email around 3 weeks prior.

_ **ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or benadryl**. Health codes require that we collect these, keep them locked up, and then distribute them as needed. We stock these anyway, and dispense as needed—so it just causes extra hassles for our health staff to have to keep track of individuals' supplies and return them at the end of the session. (If you have some extenuating circumstance, or really need to have this stuff with you while you're traveling to and from camp, you can bring it—but we'll still need to hang onto it for you during camp.)

_ An **excessive** amount of **disposable items for prom** decor. Some is fine, but we want to leave room for dancing and we also want to leave a relatively light footprint.

_ **valuables** such as fancy phones or large amounts of cash, unless you're willing to risk them. We are sad and sorry to report that on rare occasions (*very* rare—nowhere near every year, let alone every session) we have had such items stolen. Hundreds if not thousands of other gadgets and wads of cash present at camp have not been stolen—we've rarely had theft of any kind during the past 25 years, but it can happen. Staff cannot spend extensive time and energy trying to find missing valuables, nor devote significant time in group meetings to discussing their whereabouts. (Staff can keep phones and other small valuable items, cash, and such in a relatively secure lock box or in the locked trunk of a car.)

_ **knives** (such as swiss army knives and other small tools), maybe. We often collect knives for safekeeping during the session. Sometimes exceptions are made, or personal knives can be "checked out" for a whittling session, etc.

_ weapons

_ boom boxes, speakers, or other **music amplifiers**. We generally reserve the airwaves for acoustic homemade music, the lowing of cattle and singing of birds, conversation, and grunts of concentration.

_ **personal items to share** with the community, **unless you are willing to risk damage**. (Some campers have generously shared hammocks, games, tents, guitars, etc. While for the most part these items have made it through with only mild scuffs, sometimes they get full-on broken/ripped/etc. We love sharing and we encourage everyone to take good care of all the stuff in our midst, but NBTSC can't take responsibility for damage to your belongings.)

_ For Oregon ~ **disposable items** intended for the **cabin cleanup competition**—(see notes on the [Oregon Sleeping Arrangements page](#).)

_ **if you're not sure about something, please ask**

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*Travel

It's important to tell us how you are traveling. If your plans change, tell us that too!

Please get your travel information in on time

For most people, that means by July 20 for Oregon campers, by August 15 for Vermont campers. Add your info via your online account. If you're late we may not have space for you on our bus or van, or know where to look for you. Make sure we have cell phone numbers—these really help when a camper doesn't show up when and where they said they would.

Read the travel parameters for your session (arrival time window, etc.), and arrange your travel accordingly

Traveling outside of our standard time windows (or locations) will probably mean that we can't provide you with a ride to camp. Even if we *are* able to change our plans to work with you, traveling outside our normal parameters typically causes a *lot* of logistical hassle and extra work. You can also expect for it to cost you a lot of extra money (in mileage costs and payment for our drivers who make special trips), canceling out anything you were saving by intentionally traveling at an odd time. Thank you for helping our travel days to flow by working with us on this! (But also ~ in Vermont do offer an "early arrival" work party for folks who have a hard time working with our normal arrival times.)

NBTSC Travel Agent ~ New for 2025

If you're flying, consider working with our designated travel agent, [Kaylee Cooper](mailto:cooperkaylee@yahoo.com) (phone 541-921-1227, email cooperkaylee@yahoo.com). Tell her you're going to Not Back to School Camp. Kaylee will charge a flat fee of \$50 per person, for which she can both arrange your flights and also be available for any rebooking needed due to delays or cancellations. We don't know Kaylee personally but we chose her after a bit of internet research and after communicating with her. We're hopeful that she'll be a good fit for our community and can reduce the stress of dealing with air travel (and the anxiety and confusion of canceled or delayed flights). NBTSC has no financial relationship with Kaylee. Of course, you are also free to make your own reservations in your own way.

According to Kaylee, here's how working with her could look:

- **Customized Travel Plans:** Working with NBTSC's travel windows and specific requirements, she'd create a flight itinerary based on your departure city, preferences, and available options. This would help reduce the risk of cancellations and rebookings.
- **Group Coordination:** For campers flying from similar locations or groups traveling together, she could arrange shared flights or transfers to make the travel process more efficient and less stressful.
- **Support for Families:** She'd be available to guide parents through the booking process, offering advice on timing, airport logistics, and any potential challenges.
- **Contingency Plans:** In the case of cancellations or delays, she would proactively manage rebooking and assist with any unexpected travel issues to ensure campers arrive on time.

Not-so-great things happen when we don't have accurate travel info from you

If you get your travel information in on time, we will gladly reserve bus or van space for you and expect you to show up where you said, check up on late flight information (etc.) that you've provided if you're missing, have a staff person with a car wait behind for you if necessary, and do everything in our power to get you to camp (assuming you haven't made a major mistake on your end like forgetting to catch your train, or changing your travel plans without telling us). If you *don't* get your travel info on time, instead of calling you and leaving dozens of messages and spending lots of time or money trying to track you down (as we sometimes used to do), we may simply expect you to show up at Camp Myrtlewood or Farm & Wilderness at the start of camp and welcome you with the usual friendly greeting (and optional hug) once you get there. If you show up at one of our bus/van locations instead, you will be offered a seat if (and only if) there is room for you and you have also paid any associated fees. If there isn't space for you, *it is entirely your own responsibility* to get yourself to camp. This might mean taking a greyhound bus 70 miles and then getting an Uber for the final 55-mile leg.

We welcome you to send us copies of your travel itinerary

Email them to our [logistics coordinator](#), with your full name and "travel" spelled correctly in the subject line. Good chance we won't actually *read* your itinerary—you absolutely must still fill out your travel info online—but having it available in case of a hitch may be helpful.

Allow enough leeway when making travel plans

If you are flying, keep in mind check in, security, and boarding times. And also, again, be sure to share your plans with us. NBTSC cannot be responsible if you miss your flight because you didn't pay attention to our parameters, nor if you don't provide us with your travel details (or wait until the last minute!). This way everything goes more smoothly for everybody—especially you!

Travel directory

The point of the online travel directory is to help camp families connect for carpools or other shared travel. Sometimes campers who don't know anyone else (yet) use the directory to fly or take the train with other campers. You can access the password-protected directory from your online NBTSC account — it lists all the people who are registered at this point and who have opted in to the directory. If there's no note by someone's name, you can still contact them to discuss the possibility of shared travel; they just didn't provide details about their plans. Be sure to opt into the directory yourself if you want to participate!

Plan on arriving and leaving when everyone else does

Every once in a while someone informs us casually, during camp, that they will be leaving a couple days early to attend a soccer tournament. Or, their parent calls on the first day to say that their little Johnny won't actually be showing up until the third day. This doesn't work so great for us (or for everybody else in your advisee group, etc.). NBTSC is a communal one- or two-week event, with an important series of welcoming events at the beginning and closure at the end, not well-suited to part-time attendance, except and unless in those rare instances that we make a special agreement with a camper ahead of time. *(A note to all the extra-polite people in our universe: we **do** make special agreements in advance when there's good cause, so don't hesitate to ask!)* When someone finds during the session that the camp experience is just not a good fit for them, that's another matter.

If you are driving yourself to camp

- Sorry but you **can't drive during the session**, regardless of your age. Usually, **keys are kept by staff**, such as in our locked first aid supply area.
 - Occasionally there's a good reason to make an **exception** to this policy. If you'd like to discuss the possibility of special arrangements, it's best to get in touch prior to camp.
- If you're a minor and you want to depart early, we need written permission from a custodial parent/guardian.
- You **can't use your car as a hangout space**—sometimes that has contributed to a separate subculture that has excluded others.
- On the **last night of camp**, anyone who is driving the next day must **get to bed** in time for a good solid sleep. (Some campers like to stay up all of that final night ~ not an option for drivers.)

Is someone other than your legal parent/guardian picking you up after camp?

If you're a minor, we'll need authorization. Provide it via the "trusted contacts" section of your online account. (If your plans develop or change during camp, you should update this "trusted contacts" list, but please also contact us directly to make sure we've seen the change. If you email and don't hear back from us, make sure to phone or text too. We'll let you know when we've received the update.)

Make sure you completely understand the travel details for your session

[Oregon travel details](#) [Vermont travel details](#)



Photo by Zoe Newmarco, Vermont 2019

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*Food

We serve substantial, delicious meals ~ made with fresh, often organic ingredients. We usually bring our own kitchen staff, many of whom have long been an integral part of our community—they prepare vegetarian meals, accommodating vegans and working with other restrictions when possible.

Snacks

Communal snacks are occasionally available. Some campers also bring their own supply, so they can access food whenever they're hungry or when they don't like what's on offer.* Personal snacks are typically kept in a public storage area (to avoid rodent problems). **Space is limited**, so small amounts of **dense snacks** (like nuts, energy bars, or dried fruit) are better than high volume ones (like bags of popcorn or rice cakes). **Refrigeration is not available.**

* But sometimes we ask folks not to bring snacks containing specific foods (such as peanuts), if there will be campers or staff present who have severe allergies. If this applies to your session, we'll let you know by email around 3 weeks prior.

Meat

We don't serve meat. This helps keep food costs down, simplifies our menu, and makes kitchen sanitation easier. We realize that some people include meat as an important part of their diet, and you are welcome to bring your own canned or dried meat (jerky is common)—along with any necessary items like a can opener. No fresh or frozen meat, sorry ~ this is due to the challenges involved with storage, cooking, the possibility of cross-contamination, etc. (Your meat must be kept completely separate from our kitchen and refrigeration systems.) We do serve lots of protein-rich foods, including eggs, legumes, dairy products, nuts, and seeds.

Caffeine

We don't serve much in the way of caffeinated beverages—we feel that large amounts of caffeine can lead to health problems when people are already pushing their bodies and perhaps not getting enough sleep. If you can't live without, bring teabags or a simple coffee setup. (We sometimes serve tea with breakfast, but not in the quantities that some campers pine for.)



Photo from Vermont 2023

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*Dietary restrictions (including food allergies)

If there are any foods (other than meat) that you don't eat for any reason, please read this carefully.

The dietary needs of our community have exponentially complexified over the past 3 decades, so we ask detailed questions via your online NBTSC account. If you are vegan, if you have food allergies, or if you have other food needs (not minor preferences, but actual needs), be sure to carefully address these questions. This information is due July 1.

It is essential that you **provide us with complete information on food allergies and other restrictions**. (You will do this via your online account, under the “allergies” and “diet restrictions” sections of your Health and Pre-Camp Info. All **food allergies absolutely must be listed in the allergies section**—our health staffers, as well as our kitchen team, need easy access to this information. It's definitely best if you *also* spell out food allergies in the diet restrictions section; this provides us with the most complete, accessible, and clear information. That said, our kitchen team is always notified about food allergies.) And then at camp we need you to **eat what you said you would eat, and not eat foods you said you can't or won't eat**. Sounds simple, but we've had significant problems and misunderstandings. (“If this issue continues to grow it's going to be harder and harder to be excited for this job,” says one of our beloved longtime cooks.) In hopes of clarity, here are some guidelines and notes about dietary restrictions and the questions we ask. We deeply appreciate your collaboration and cooperation!

Your dietary restrictions and food allergies info is not kept confidential

Some or all of this information is posted in the kitchen, and campers may see each others' data when we check to make sure that everyone is cognizant of what we have them down for. **If there's something more private** you want only staff to know (perhaps something about your mental health in relation to food), please share it when you come to the question, “Would you like to share anything else regarding how food may affect you, or your relationship to food?”

Things to know before sharing your dietary restrictions and food allergies with us

We serve all-vegetarian meals (no meat of any kind including fish, seafood, poultry, etc.). We use mostly organic dairy products and eggs (and produce, grains, etc.) but are not strict about this—there are exceptions now and then. We do our best to accommodate dietary restrictions but there are some diets we do not have the resources to support.

Regarding common allergens such as nuts, peanuts, etc.: Sometimes, when a camper or staffer is known to have a very severe allergy, we will not include that food in our menu and we will ask that campers and staff not bring snacks containing that food. But we can never guarantee that there is no *trace* of any particular ingredient in our kitchen or elsewhere on site.

We cannot accommodate some allergies or complex dietary needs

We do our best to meet campers' dietary needs but occasionally we are unable to do so. In such cases, we can usually allocate freezer and/or refrigerator space (plus microwave access) so you can bring your own pre-cooked meals. If we're not sure we can fully accommodate your restrictions, we'll be in touch to discuss how this could work in your case.

Please plan to eat what you say you'll eat

We invite you to let us know that you're vegan, that you're allergic to cayenne, whatever. Thing is, **once you tell us what you want, we need you to stick**. You can't eat the amazing vegan uncheesecake if you didn't sign up for vegan meals. (Unless there's explicitly enough for everybody.) This is a real, perennial issue for us—people trying to eat the food they did not sign up for. It is an intensely intricate job to purchase and prepare food that fulfills everybody's needs, and it's depressing for allergic folks when their piece of gluten-free pie is gobbled up by somebody who thinks it looks “interesting,” discouraging for cooks when they take pains to accommodate an alleged wheat allergy and then that person eats wheat bread all day at the snack table, etc.

Please don't state preferences as needs

We all have things we prefer not to eat, but that don't hurt us or violate our philosophical commitments. (One year, our cooks bent over backwards to create banana-free editions of certain desserts, only to find out later that the camper who “couldn't” eat bananas merely didn't like them.) We can't plan around preferences except, for example, if your casual preference is to avoid wheat and you are vegan, then if there are other vegans who are allergic to wheat we can easily add you to their ranks—that sort of thing, we can work with. We do already take into account the things that lots of campers don't like (brussels sprouts, etc.). We love to please as many people as possible—we just don't have the budget to accommodate everyone's exact tastes.

And please do not dream up a special diet just for camp

If you want to experiment with being vegan, fine—it's easy to add you to the list of other plain-vanilla vegans. But if you normally eat onions (or corn, wheat, soy, etc.), please do not decide to try “onion-free” during camp. We really don't like it when we find out that someone decided to “experiment” with a new, complicated diet just for camp. On top of all the rest of the kitchen complexity we understand to be necessary, it makes us a little crazy.

Sorry, but your food may be boring

While our cooks are sometimes mind-bogglingly generous in their efforts to cook up beautiful meals for each individual with special parameters, on a policy level NBTSC is moving toward more simplicity. We cannot afford the staff to accommodate all campers' needs unless we sometimes batch various needs together. Sometimes folks complain that their special needs are lumped together with other special diet folks (gluten-free and soy-free together, for example). Sorry, but sometimes that's how it goes—our cooks simply cannot prepare 5 completely different versions of a meal. To do that, at minimum we would need to hire more staff, and families would need to pay more for NBTSC.

And there may be times when you are left out

If you are allergic to chocolate, for example, it's possible that there would be a brownie night without a special separate dessert just for you. Philosophically we like to include everyone in everything as much as possible. (And in cases like this example, the cooks might save a bit of a previous dessert for you.) But logistically, we may not be able to create alternatives for every single person on every single item at every single meal. Just like other campers, you are [welcome to bring snacks](#).

If your diet changes after you submit your information, let us know ASAP

Contact Maya (909-206-2872, or NotBackTo@gmail.com). Make sure you receive confirmation that Maya received your information. We will do our best to incorporate it into our plans; the sooner we receive your updates the more likely we can accommodate your needs.

Kitchen is not available to campers

In the past we sometimes allowed special diet folks to prepare their own food in the kitchen. Occasionally this went well; usually it did not. Please don't plan on kitchen access.

A microwave may be available

At some sessions, we can offer this—to lessen the burden on kitchen staff, and to make it easier for campers with dietary restrictions to bring and prepare foods they like. If this would make a helpful difference for you, let us know and we'll try to provide you with microwave access.

Parents need to understand that we're not enforcers

We provide food; we do not supervise, monitor, prevent, or enforce its consumption. Staff cannot guarantee that any camper will make decisions consistent with the information that parents provide. If your child is not mature enough to avoid foods they know to be problematic, NBTSC may not be a good fit. (We have, for example, witnessed a "strictly-gluten-free" camper consuming hunks of regular bread, even after we checked in and reminded him about the health conditions described in his health info.)



Photo by Blake Boles, Oregon 2022

Small amounts of any food may be present in anything

At each session, we have only one kitchen to work in. (We do not have a separate gluten-free kitchen.) Hence, NBTSC may not be a good match for people with severe allergies to even trace amounts (of pretty much anything, including gluten, nuts, and peanuts). (That said, we sometimes have cooks on our kitchen team who are strictly gluten-free themselves, and who have severe reactions to even touching gluten, so when they're present our GF campers are pretty well taken care of. Feel free to reach out if you want to discuss particulars.)

Campers with serious allergies must check in with kitchen staff at the start of camp

All campers with dietary restrictions of any kind are *encouraged* to touch base with kitchen staff, but folks with serious allergies *must* do so. It's important for us to speak in person to make sure we're on the same page, and so we can explain specific protocols. For example, we often ask campers with serious allergies to go to the front of meal lines to avoid cross-contamination.

Depending on various factors, sometimes we schedule a group meeting (on the first afternoon/evening of camp, or the following morning). Other times, instead of scheduling a meeting we ask that individual campers come to the kitchen to introduce themselves and touch base. Prior to camp, we'll communicate the exact plans so you know what to expect (and how to get your food needs met) in the first 18 hours or so.

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*Health, Safety, and Special Needs

(See more about health on our [vitality page](#) and our [health history page](#).)

A note for 2025 ~ about Covid (& other unpredictable health challenges)

We hope Covid will have little impact on our 2025 sessions, but it's still important that we do our best to protect the health of campers, staff, site residents, and the families and communities that all of us return to after camp. Therefore, like last year, everybody still needs to be flexible and ready to cooperate as needed. If rapid tests are still available this summer for a reasonable cost, good chance we'll all partake in a round or two of testing. Beyond that, if Covid (or some other unexpected guest) shows up this summer in challenging ways, we'll adapt as best we can. Rather than try to pin down at the time of this writing (January) what precisely will be needed in August and September, we'll share specifics with you closer to camp time. If we expect significant protocols, we'll let you know by around mid-June, via email notifications sent to the authorized users in your online NBTSC account. See our website [Covid page](#) for a longer—but still somewhat general—Covid statement.)

We are not a medical camp. You must take responsibility for your own health. We do have staff with basic first aid skills, as well as a staffer who dispenses prescription meds (which is legally required in camp situations) and who offers a bit of TLC to campers who aren't feeling well whether due to a sore throat or menstrual cramps. Occasionally we have a licensed nurse on staff. Often but not always, we have one or more staffers with advanced certifications such as wilderness first responder and/or EMT.

Please be prepared in case you need to visit a clinic or hospital. Although only a few campers now and then need to leave camp to see a medical professional, when folks are not prepared these trips can be a nightmare—and involve really, really long waits. With a little bit of advance planning, they usually go easily. Things tend to flow nicely when:

- your insurance info is complete, on file, readily accessible. All campers must have medical insurance. (If your family doesn't have regular insurance, get traveler's medical/accident/hospital insurance for the duration of your session.) Upload a copy of both sides of your health insurance card, via your online health history. Ideally, also carry an actual card (or a photo on your phone).
- you know the name and birthdate of the parent who's the main subscriber to your family insurance
- you call your regular doctor before camp, to let them know about your camp plans. Some medical excursions can be avoided if a doctor is available to authorize a prescription over the phone.
- you have a debit or credit card (or cash) in case you need to pay for an office visit or prescription.

Preferred hospitals or other local healthcare providers

In emergencies, urgent situations, and less urgent situations (such as a clinic visit for conjunctivitis) campers are usually taken to whatever nearby hospital or clinic is normally used (and recommended) by site managers. (Or whatever hospital an ambulance defaults to.) We once had a parent share afterward that she would have preferred a different (slightly further away) hospital than the one we chose. If you would like to look into local options you are welcome to share your preferences with us. Of course we also try to contact parents by phone before seeking medical care for (minor) campers. (In any serious emergency we would likely prioritize proximity/rapid access over other concerns.)

Do you have special health needs?

If you have specific physical and/or mental health needs, we absolutely must know details in advance. **If you are likely to need significant or ongoing support from staff, unfortunately we probably don't have the resources to host you.** But we'd be happy to consider your situation individually. If there's uncertainty on our end or yours, we'll ask your family to prepare a contingency plan in case things don't go as hoped and you need to depart NBTSC on short notice.

Our sites have (limited) accessible accommodations and can accommodate wheelchairs, though like any outdoor setting they can pose challenges to anyone, regardless of physical condition.

Allergies

If you sometimes (or potentially) need or use an **epi-pen**, bring two. (*Get them* if you don't have them already.) Our outdoor environment, with the potential for insect stings, plant allergens, etc., is as likely a place as ever for you to need it. You'd keep one with you, and another in our central health supplies as a backup.

If you have **food allergies**, please also see the section above on [dietary restrictions](#).

Asthma and related conditions

We suggest bringing two inhalers—keep one with you, and the other in our central health supplies as a backup. This is especially important in Oregon because we sometimes get smoke from regional wildfires.

What if you get sick when it's time to come to camp?

Depending on how sick you are and what you have (and of course whether it's contagious), we may ask you to stay home until you're better. Generally speaking, folks with flu or flu-like symptoms are asked to stay home for a period of time, whereas folks with mild colds are sometimes cleared—provided they are willing to take care of their health and follow our guidelines to avoid spreading pathogens.

Oregon health notes

In case of emergency, you would most likely be taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital (in Coquille)—it's approximately 45 minutes away, but the ambulance is local and can arrive quickly.

Natural hazards

We have occasionally experienced wasp and bee stings. Camp Myrtlewood also has poison oak—a few campers who have gone hiking (and strayed a bit from the trails) have had minor incidents. We'll show you how to identify it, and if you pay attention it shouldn't be a problem. It's also important to check for ticks after hiking.

Also, like many areas throughout the West and Northwest, Camp Myrtlewood sometimes experiences **smoky air** due to regional wildfires. (The only time this has been significant during our stay was in 2017, but realistically it could become an issue at any time. In more recent years we have experienced a few mildly smoky days.) If you have asthma or another health condition that is triggered by periods of poor air quality, please bring inhalers and any other supplies that may be helpful for you. (In fact, we strongly suggest two inhalers, so you can keep one on your person and we can keep the other in our central health supply area in case you misplace yours.)

Vermont health notes

In addition to our own staff with first aid and/or emergency training, most Farm and Wilderness staffers hold wilderness first responder certification. In case of emergency, there is a 911 First Responder Team in nearby Plymouth; if necessary, you would be taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital. (Rutland Hospital is 30 minutes away; Dartmouth is 12 minutes away via helicopter.)

Natural hazards

Farm and Wilderness has ticks, poison ivy, and snakes. None of these are likely to pose any significant problems (nor have they in past sessions), and at camp we talk about ways to deal with them. Note that in 2023, in the aftermath of catastrophic flooding, we had a lot of mosquitoes. This was a one-time occurrence and we hope it will never happen again, but if we did ever have reason to expect another mosquito-rich season, we'd suggest bringing mosquito nets (cabins are open-air 3-sided structures).



Photo by Blake Boles, Oregon 2022

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How to Contact Us (Campers, Staff, Office) during camp season

A few weeks before your session starts, **we send out an email** with key reminders and updates, including any new information about how to contact us during camp.

You can also check our **website [contact page](#)** for any general updates on how to best reach us just before and during camp. (That page is updated if necessary starting around late June, whereas we don't expect to change this handbook after it is published in the winter.)

Calling our main office phone number may not connect you to us at camp—you may instead reach Maya at home in Joshua Tree, California. (But sometimes it does reach us at camp—this shifts from session to session depending on several factors. We just don't want you to count on it as a perennial, reliable method of getting in touch with us directly.) Our pre-camp email should clarify this.

Parents: If you call camp (while we are in session) and reach voicemail but want someone on staff to return your call, please specify your question or concern so the right person can call you back. (Like, it's a waste of your time and ours if you ask for a director to call you back, but what you really need is to discuss – with our logistics coordinator – changes to travel plans.) Also, note that **we cannot always be consistently or reliably reached by email during camp**. Make sure to convey important information by phone, or at least verify that it has been received by email.

Need to contact us about travel or other logistics, in the weeks just before camp?

For issues related to payment, status of your registration or the information we need from you, please continue to contact our main office (that is, Maya). *Our logistics team cannot help you with these things.*

For other concerns, including questions about travel, you can also contact our logistics team. In the weeks and days prior to camp they are usually available via [email](#). Our website [contact page](#) may also offer a seasonal phone/text number.

If you are coming to a later session of camp and want to discuss your travel plans or such with logistics folks during an earlier session of camp, see below, "How people can reach you at camp." (If your question can wait till camp's not in session, though, that would be great.)

How people can reach you during camp

Oregon

Phone ~urgent or important situations only: 541-572-5307. (Actual humans—the Camp Myrtlewood site managers—often answer this phone at all hours in case there is an incoming emergency call. Therefore, please take care not to call in the middle of the night if it's not an emergency.)

Mail: *Your Name* c/o NBTSC, Camp Myrtlewood, 49658 Myrtle Creek Rd, Myrtle Point, OR 97458

Vermont

Phone ~ urgent or important calls; also to reach logistics staff re travel plans, etc: 802-391-8720. If you don't reach us, you can also try 802-422-3448 or 802-487-0399. For emergencies only, if you can't reach us at those numbers, call the Farm & Wilderness Emergency Pager, 888-622-3276—ask for the "Operations Coordinator" and "Retreat Group." Say you're calling for someone at Not Back to School Camp, staying at Firefly Song, and be sure to leave a callback number.

Mail: *Your Name* c/o NBTSC, Firefly Song, 263 Farm & Wilderness Road, Plymouth, VT 05056

More about phones, mail, and email at all sessions

In each of our locations there is only one official landline to be used for important or urgent situations. "Important" can mean checking in with your parents occasionally if you're not used to being away from home or just need to hear a familiar voice, so do ask us if that applies to you, but you will need to keep your conversations fairly short. Please also plan to provide a phone card so that the site is not billed for your call. (Different sites have different billing setups, and sometimes these change year to year.) But, if you need to make a call and you don't have a phone card, it's no big deal—you can totally still use the phone.

We do sometimes have an additional phone (such as a staff cell phone in Oregon) available for use, but even so—many people share; calls need to be limited and short.

Cell phones

In Oregon, Verizon cell phones work pretty well; sometimes others work, but reception is inconsistent. In Vermont, on rare occasions people have gotten a cell signal, particularly after hiking up a high hill.

If you bring a phone to camp, please plan to keep it off, and put away, during meetings, workshops, meals, etc., and in cabins and public buildings. We do expect everyone to be courteous and to pay attention to the people they are with rather than to their phones. (Since it is up to you how you spend most of your time at camp, it should be easy to find time to step away and make calls

or read and send texts in privacy.) We understand that sometimes people use phones to take pictures or notes, or campers enjoy sharing games and such with each other, and we don't ban such things.... it's more that we highly value, and want to maintain, the NBTSC culture of connection and attention to one another. And, of course, we need everybody's focused participation during meetings, as well as workshops and other events they choose to join.

Email is not reliably available at camp

Some of our sites have occasional internet service, but we can't count on this (and it changes year to year), and even when it is available we don't normally make it available to campers. When the site has internet (again: not always!) and a camper has a particular need or special reason to use it, we consider such requests individually. Parents, it's fine to try emailing us (staff) to communicate important information during camp, but there's some chance we won't get it—so if you don't hear back promptly, please phone.

Postal mail

Delivery can be slow, as in any remote area. Expect mail to take at least 1-2 more days to arrive than it would to reach a nearby city. If it arrives on departure day, campers will almost for sure have already left. Our sites do not attempt to forward mail.

We beseech parents to please not send large quantities of cookies, candy, etc., in care packages. There is usually a fair amount of sugar floating around camp already—because some campers bring and share it—and we feel it contributes to their immune systems getting compromised and sickness encroaching.



Photo by Blake Boles, Oregon 2022

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Camp Life



Photo by Zoe Newmarco, Vermont 2019

How to Get the Most Out of NBTSC

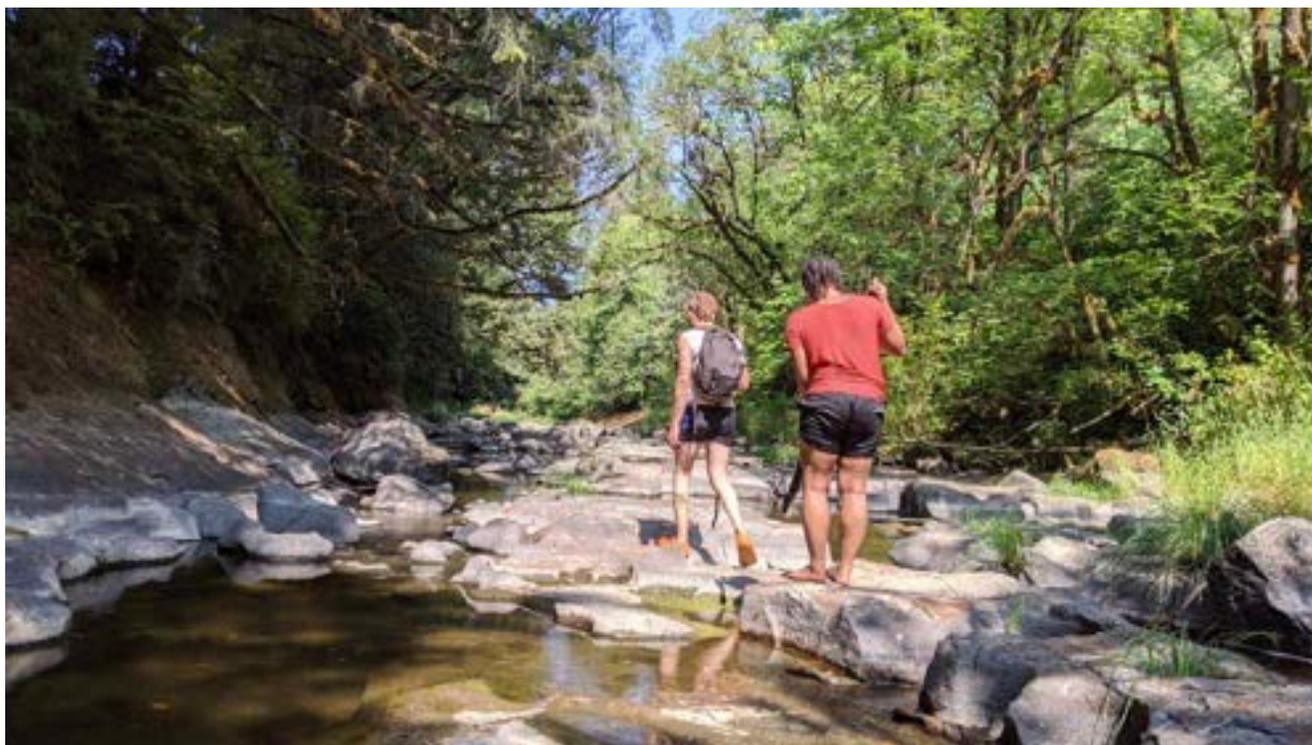


Photo by Fred, Oregon 2023

Think about what you want to get out of camp. Set a few intentions—memorize them or carry them around in your pocket on an index card, or write them on your hand. Consider discussing with your parents or a mentor. (Watching our short **video with advice from staffers** will spark ideas — you’ll receive a link via email a few weeks before your session starts.)

Yet, don’t limit yourself to preconceived notions. NBTSC is a space that often widens perceptions of what is possible. Maybe let one of your intentions be to stay open to new things and new perspectives.

If you’re lonely, or nervous about making friends, go to stuff! The easiest and least threatening way to make friends at camp is to participate in workshops and other scheduled events, of which there are tons. NBTSC is usually also a welcoming community in which to simply introduce yourself to other people and strike up a conversation, join people you don’t know at breakfast, start your own lunch-table discussion group, or ask for volunteers for a talent show skit. Everyone benefits when campers reach out this way, and many do so. But we repeat: you don’t even have to be that proactive to start making friends—just go to stuff that other people have organized! Once you’re there just participate, look for ways to be helpful or interactive, be nice to people (especially others who also look a little lonely or nervous), and you’re well on your way to connection.

Whether you’re new to camp or a 5-year veteran, **see yourself both as a newcomer and as an “old camper.”** See yourself as having everything to learn about these 70-130 people (and all the things they know about), and about yourself in this particular context. At the same time, see yourself as having all kinds of wisdom and knowledge and experience from your own life (and possibly from past sessions of NBTSC) to share. Everyone, new or not, is welcome to feel like a raw beginner and to have waves of insecurity. And everyone, returning or not, is welcome to share their skills and insights and fully participate in co-creating NBTSC.

Older campers and veteran campers, know that even if you have your own insecurities, *you are important* to younger campers and new campers. We often hear comments like this one from a new camper: “It’s nice to have older campers approach new campers to draw them out. It makes a big difference.”

Organization—plan how to not lose your stuff, label your possessions, and check the lost and found frequently. Write your name on the directory you receive at camp. (We make sure everyone gets one, but we don’t usually have extras.)

We suggest that you **make a schedule for each day**—workshops you’d like to attend and what time they start, when you have superhero time (chores), potential nap times, people you want to make a point of talking with, things you want to prepare for (talent show, your workshop), etc. There are so many choices that some people get overwhelmed if they don’t plan. Many people comment on the last day that they wish they’d been more proactive in this way. There is plentiful time for spontaneity, but a little bit of planning can enhance your NBTSC experience.

Along that same line—**some people have a hard time dealing with the wide open structure of camp**; they find that making plans, choosing what to do throughout the day, etc., can be challenging. If you find yourself in this position, ask your advisor for help, or turn to an older sibling or friend or somebody in your advisee group who's been at camp before.

Plan to take care of yourself. We don't baby you—you get a lot of freedom, choose your own bedtime, etc. Fun spontaneous things do occasionally happen at night, but you can miss them and still have a fabulous time. We address the sleep issue directly and proactively at camp, but how much you get is ultimately up to you. And we're not talking only about sleep—stay grounded, go off by yourself and sit in the sun and just breathe when you need to. Along that line...

Pace yourself, especially if you're coming for two weeks. If you've never had to pace yourself before, take some time before camp to think through how that might work for you. Our schedule is designed to help (we have low-key sleep-in days every so often), but you should also make it your own business to get enough sleep and take enough time for yourself (journaling, doing your yoga practice, etc.) early in the session, so you don't burn out.

Sharing your skills with others doesn't have to stay confined to the workshop schedule—feel free to watch for spontaneous opportunities. Maybe bring your hacky sack or a couple embroidery hoops or harmonicas.

If Assassin is played, make an informed, thoughtful decision regarding whether to join. This is a game often played at camp, over a duration of several days. When someone decides to organize it, they explain the rules in a meeting, and then a lot of people typically choose to play. While it can be intensely exciting, many people later feel that they wound up spending a lot of time being paranoid and sneaky, rather than relaxing into the open friendly atmosphere of camp. (If you're curious, there's an explanation of Assassin on wikipedia. The version played at camp is less complex, and there are no play weapons involved, but still—the article gives a sense of how it works.)

You reap what you sow. If you arrive determined to give your whole self—communicate honestly and openly, be emotionally available and authentic, take risks, wipe tables or scrub toilets with gladness (yeah, really), make a fool of yourself trying new stuff, share what you know, listen deeply to your new friends—we can promise you one of the best times of your life.

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Help co-create and re-create NBTSC culture!

Part of why NBTSC is awesome is because of all the great traditions and values we've gradually built together. Many of these were originally brought and shared by individual campers. (Bonding Night, for example, came from a camper who had done a similar activity in her Unitarian church youth group.)

NBTSC culture is always shifting and growing, mostly as a result of the individuals who join us. **If YOU come to camp, then we want YOU and YOUR CULTURE to become part of NBTSC culture.** The more you show and share who you are, the more NBTSC can reflect who you are.

So—please, please share whatever is important to you. This means you as an individual, and it can also mean you as part of your family, and/or part of a larger culture or cultures. The cultures that campers and staff bring and openly share at camp can include their ethnic or religious culture and heritage as well as other aspects of identity (like queer culture). Campers also expose our community to a multitude of *subcultures*—through their connections to skateboarding, hip hop, video games, punk music, partner dancing, the maker movement, etc.

So how exactly can you bring your culture to camp?

Some straightforward ways are:

- A workshop you teach
- Your talent show act
- Something you display in the art show
- A short film you contribute to our film festival
- Conversations you initiate or participate in
- The clothes you wear (every day, plus special moments like prom or closing ceremony)
- Bring a song that we can all learn and sing together (tell our staff songleaders)
- Bring a game to teach your advisee group if there's time (talk with your advisor)
- Bring a small item to show to your advisee group as part of your check-in one day
- Host a lunch or dinner table event such as a Shabbat table or a Spanish-speaking table

Occasionally we can also add a whole new activity or event to the schedule—as a one-time experiment or the start of a new tradition. If you have an idea, talk to us! Reach out prior to camp or during camp. If it's a small thing, like a 5-minute activity we can do at the end of a meeting, there's a better chance we can integrate it, but regardless of length, we want to hear from you!

Thanks for being you and thanks for being part of us!



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*The Vitality Project

This page has not been adapted for Covid, since at the time of writing (January) it's impossible to predict where things will be by summer. See our short general statement on the [Health, Safety, and Special Needs](#) page, and a little longer statement on our website [Covid page](#).

What with folks bringing germs from all over the continent (and beyond), and not sleeping a whole lot, and getting worn down traveling and visiting friends before camp even starts, and then hugging nonstop during camp, in our past we sometimes had a lot of sickness. We then made a concerted effort to turn this around and overall, we've been much healthier in recent years—but still with a few disturbing backslid moments. We intend to continue toward an even more radiant NBTSC in the future. Our policies are designed to support all of us in having a zesty, sparkly, healthy, energized camp experience together. Here are a few important things to keep in mind and to do.

We can't admit campers with flu-like symptoms or certain other contagious illnesses

All campers are screened for flu-like symptoms upon arrival at camp (or, upon meeting our buses/vans in town). People with these symptoms are generally not admitted to camp. (We reserve the right to make exceptions to this policy where that seems like the best choice, all things considered—such as when a young, sick camper is far from home with no relatives nearby. In such cases we take care to isolate that person to protect others.)

You'll need to notify us in advance if you have cold or flu-like symptoms, lice, pinkeye, mono, or any infectious disease that might be spread at camp. Depending on what you have and other factors, we will decide whether you can participate and what additional measures we might take at camp to protect your health and others' health. If you have a minor cold or certain other conditions, we may still allow you to come, but will likely ask you to bring special items or take specific steps to protect others. We will also want to meet with you right at the start of camp to make sure we're on the same page. If you have flu-like symptoms, or possible other conditions, we'll ask that you not travel to camp—or at least wait until you're better.

We usually send an email in the summer reminding you about the importance of this policy, and asking you to get in touch with us if you have a situation that might pose a challenge for camp. Also:

All campers and staff submit prescreening info throughout the 3 weeks prior to camp

Starting 3 weeks before your session, you'll be prompted via email to check in several times (online) re the current status of your health and the measures you are taking to show up on arrival day free of contagious pathogens and otherwise bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. Though perhaps a bit annoying, we find that this process contributes greatly to mindfulness among our community. (All staff, as well as campers, are required to participate.) Details may shift slightly, but good chance you'll be asked to check in (answer a few questions online) a total of 4 or 5 times ~ once during that first week, once during the second week, and then daily for 2 or 3 days just prior to the session.

There's no need to start filling out prescreening before the due dates. We'll send email reminders when it's time.

photo by Jules Rogmans, Oregon 2013

If you get sick at camp, staff may require things of you such as

- Sleeping in an assigned infirmary bed, or possibly in your own bed (if you seem to have just a very minor cold), rather than in a more public space
- Going to bed by a certain time
- Not participating in Bonding Night or other activities that involve hugging or lots of other touch

- Not going through meal lines (a friend or staffer can get your food).

As always, we consider each situation individually, but we definitely take a proactive stance on health. We want to support people in getting well promptly, and also in not getting sick in the first place.

A few requests and suggestions *(based on 27 years of observation)*

- Please think twice before **bringing significant amounts of candy, soda, or other sugary snacks, highly caffeinated beverages, or junk food** in general—for yourself or to share. If you do bring some, consider bringing the smallest amount you think you can be happy with for the session. We are not trying to shame anyone, or moralize—we just want to keep people healthy at camp; and sugar, caffeine (especially late in the day), etc., can undermine your immune system.
 - **Parents** ~ please **don't send** large quantities of **sugar** via “care” packages.
- Bring a **water bottle**, labeled with your first and last name, which you will carry around all the time and not share with anyone. It's a win-win-win ~ you'll stay hydrated. You'll avoid sharing or spreading pathogens. And the dish crew will have fewer cups to wash.
- Bring a **thermos** for hot liquids. One of our staff nurses has said we should make a thermos quasi-mandatory. She said that carrying around hot tea or broth and drinking it regularly can make a huge difference for people fighting or recovering from sickness.
- Get lots of **sleep before camp**.
- **Wash your hands often**, especially before meals. We also recommend carrying a small bottle of **sanitizer** in your pocket—great for after you've been hugging and holding hands with potentially germy people. (We also keep sanitizer on hand in main camp buildings.)
- Bring a **warm jacket** to wear at night and in the morning, and **warm enough bedding** (“warm enough” varies by session—see [“what to bring.”](#))
- If you must **sneeze or cough**, do so **into a tissue** and then immediately throw away the tissue. No tissue handy? Dive into your **elbow**.
- If you live in a different time zone (or even if you don't), try to **adjust to getting up by approximately 9:00** a.m. (Pacific or east coast time, depending on which NBTSC) before camp starts. (Breakfast usually runs from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m. The first required activity is check-in, around 10:15.)
- Be mindful about your choices in the **days and weeks before camp**: get plenty of sleep, stay hydrated, and otherwise take care of yourself so you don't arrive run down. Try to plan a stress-free travel-to-camp experience.
- **Avoid picking up pathogens while traveling** through airports, bus terminals, train stations, etc. Wash and sanitize your hands frequently, especially after touching other people, and before eating or touching your face.

Consider bringing health support items that work for you

You're welcome to bring your own stash of remedies that you use both to prevent and treat simple illnesses and symptoms—vitamin C, throat lozenges, etc. Whatever you use to boost your immune system to avoid getting colds and to keep your energy up, and whatever you use when you are congested, have a headache or sore throat or allergies—good idea to bring it (and then just return whatever you don't use to your family's health supply cabinet). **We keep a well-stocked first aid kit, but cannot guarantee that we'll have what you prefer** to take, or enough of it to make you happy. (We can't, for example, provide everybody with dozens of **throat lozenges**.) We're talking here mainly about supplements, simple herbal remedies, etc. We don't typically keep such items in our locked medication area, though it's not out of the question that this could happen in specific circumstances.

On the other hand ~ unless your circumstances are unusual or you need access during travel, please **don't bring acetaminophen, benadryl, or ibuprofen**. Legalities require us to keep these locked up with prescription meds, and we keep plenty of this stuff on hand anyway, so... just simplifies things for everybody if you don't bring a personal supply.

Advice from staffers

A slightly condensed report from a past advisor (Brittney) who had gotten sick at previous sessions:

I didn't get sick at camp! I came home, got a good night's sleep, and went on with my life! My recipe:

- sleep (headed for bed at 10 PM each night)
- daily vitamins
- extra Vitamin C
- hand-washing (+ periodic sanitizing for fun & peace of mind)
- nightly showering & teeth brushing
- tea

For me, that seemed to make a world of difference.

Brittney later sent another email about staying sparkly at camp. You'll find excerpts in the "NBTS Camper Handbook Extras," accessible via our [fine print](#) page.

From Grace (who has attended more NBTS sessions than anyone else)

Over the years I've boiled my own stay-well-at-camp strategy down to a few things that I know work for me and I trust myself to implement:

- lots of hot tea
- a strong commitment to go to bed right after the evening events end
- a protein-heavy breakfast
- a slightly bigger dose of my usual daily vitamins and supplements
- making a point of stretching and breathing deeply in the sunshine every day
- sometimes, a few drops of antiviral essential oils (like thyme) on my pillow and on my clothing around the neckline.

If despite all that I feel symptoms, I'll chew up a clove of raw garlic twice a day with meals and find time for long naps. Last but certainly not least, in Vermont I have often slept with a hot water bottle.



Photo by Fred, Oregon 2023

But don't worry, just make a few plans and bring a few things that work for you!

Our many suggestions are not intended to overwhelm you! We offer them to help you think about your options and choose a few that you're already familiar with and that you know you would actually use at camp. It's so much better to experience a healthy camp session, and frontloading a bit of thoughtful effort can make a big difference.

Of course, health is connected to sleep ~ see the next page, on [sleep and bedtimes](#).

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*The NBTSC Approach to Sleep

We take sleep seriously because we want everybody to have a great time together. Our vision is that every single person gets a full, cozy, delicious night of sleep every single night.

After reading this page, please take some time (before camp) to reflect and then create your own personal bedtime policy.



Photo by Maeve Dorsey, Vermont 2024

Why we make a fuss over sleep and bed time

- To encourage vibrant daytime sunshine magic
- So it's easy for people who want to sleep to do so
- So that cabins (and nearby areas) are quiet
- So that people don't get sick.

We know that many factors are involved in each of these goals. One of those factors is what time people go to bed, and where and in what manner they sleep. We think this is an important factor, since sleep is healing and some people get little of it at camp.

We have never enforced a bed time, and don't want to; we never want to unnecessarily limit freedom. But we do suggest that you contemplate your needs and goals and make a plan or commitment regarding when you go to bed—*prior to camp*. This could be as concrete as specifying your latest possible bedtime. Or a list of the factors you will consider each night in deciding when to go to bed, or a commitment to set an alarm for midnight at which point you'll take 15 minutes alone to tune in to your body and decide what's best for you that night. We suggest you talk about this with a parent or another person whom you respect and who cares about you. Your commitment becomes your personal NBTSC "bedtime policy," and we suggest that you write a draft before you come to camp. (For example: "I will go to bed by 1 a.m. every night, earlier if I'm feeling sleepy, except the last night. And, I won't start new activities and invite other people into them after midnight.") You can change your policy at camp if you want (and nobody besides you helps enforce it unless you want them to), but it's best when people arrive with a clear idea of how they intend to take care of their sleeping needs.

**For additional sample bedtime policies, see the "NBTSC Camper Handbook Extras," accessible via our [fine print](#) page.*

Also, we do close some or all of the public buildings, usually between midnight and 1:00 a.m. We sometimes provide a space for group sleeping. Shared sleeping areas are typically outdoors or in semi-open buildings.

To sleep better, we recommend good earplugs—if you're a light sleeper, possibly a heavy duty version plus an eye mask. Another way to improve your chances of sleeping well is to request a **quiet cabin**. While *everyone* is expected to be quiet and keep the lights off in cabins during certain hours, quiet cabin folks usually cooperate even better in this realm. (And lights-out time begins a little earlier, though you still don't need to be in your cabin by any particular time.)

Occasionally, though, there aren't enough campers who want a quiet cabin so we don't designate any as "quiet." Also, cabin preferences are mostly first-come first-served, so it sometimes happens that campers who register later are assigned to quiet cabins even though they didn't request one—or the other way around. (More about cabins on the [Oregon sleeping arrangements page](#) and the [Vermont sleeping arrangements page](#).)

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*Agreements

a.k.a. "how we do things at camp," a.k.a. "rules"

We started—and continue to run—NBTSC because we have a particular vision. We want to create an environment where a big group of people supports each other in: learning new things; growing intellectually, physically, emotionally, creatively, and spiritually; challenging themselves and taking healthy risks; giving and receiving love; making friends; being supported as unschoolers; getting inspired about life and learning; and experiencing joy. (Another way we express our vision is with our mission statement.) We ask that you make certain agreements to help us make the NBTSC vision come true and to avoid the kinds of obstacles that would threaten it. And that is the only reason for our agreements—not because we think that every single one of them represents the way you should necessarily live all the time, and not because we wish to police or moralize.

We are not trying to oppress anybody, and are always open to explaining the agreements. If you have questions or concerns, send us an email, give us a call, or talk with staff (especially directors) at camp.

Prior to camp, you'll receive a link to a short video that reviews the NBTSC agreements. Please watch it (ideally together with your parents) so we're on the same page and need not go over the agreements in detail during our camp orientation meetings.

If you break agreements, do expect consequences. For very small things we may feel satisfied after sitting down for a chat; for medium things we'll expect you to make amends, to contribute something back to the community; for things that feel serious (and "serious" does include being repeatedly dishonest with staff), you may be asked to leave camp. We run NBTSC because we love to work cooperatively with teenagers, and it is not our idea of fun to redirect our energy to playing police. If you are looking for a place to rebel, please find it somewhere else.

Everybody signs a statement that they will keep the agreements, as part of registering for camp. We imagine that for 96% of our campers, that commitment is sufficient. But ~ because signing a statement online 6 months prior to camp can be somewhat abstract, we often keep it real by also verbally committing, at camp, face to face, that we will keep the agreements. (Our research guru, Nathen Lester, has also pointed out that research shows, overwhelmingly, that verbally committing to something vastly increases the odds that a person will pull off their commitment. Therefore, one of the main reasons we all verbally commit at camp is in solidarity with those campers whose everyday lives are such that keeping the agreements at camp will be a challenge.)

A note to parents

You read about this topic before your family registered, but we address it again here to make double-sure we're all on the same page.

NBTSC is a pretty free environment compared to most camps and other adult-organized activities for teenagers. For many of our campers, this feels natural and reflects the freedom they are accustomed to at home, although in a large gathering of teenagers it obviously has different ramifications. Since so many of our campers are already accustomed to taking significant responsibility for their own decisions, our setup tends to work well overall. But, if our agreements don't address something that is important to you, or if your kid is on the younger side or just isn't used to being in charge of most of their decisions, please discuss any issues that you feel are important, making additional agreements amongst yourselves as needed. It is our experience that when people who have good relationships with their parents come to NBTSC, they are quite willing to do things that their parents request of them. We can't take on the role of enforcing these agreements, but several campers have told us that, for instance, they are sleeping in their own beds each night (instead of in group sleeping areas) at their parents' request. Also, of course, we can't guarantee to you that campers will keep even their agreements with *us*, though we are proactive about engaging when needed. Campers are in charge of their own behavior—that's how we do things at NBTSC. We don't play a disciplinarian role except in occasional moments when that seems called for. We do pay attention, stay in close touch, make our expectations clear, build trust as much as possible (which helps to avoid rebellion, though we mostly like to build trust for bigger reasons), and follow up when we know of problems. Overall, the general vibe is usually that campers and staff respect each other and everyone respects the agreements.

And yet, alas, occasionally we have to ask someone to leave.

Unfortunately, we do need parents to be prepared for their kids to get sent home if they break agreements repeatedly or in any way that the staff deems serious or likely to undermine others' camp experience. Bringing or using illegal drugs or alcohol, sharing prescription medications, leaving the grounds all night, having sex with another person at camp, abusing another person physically or verbally/emotionally, stealing from other campers or staff, or lying to staff about their own involvement in such activities are the main reasons campers have been asked to leave in the past. The people who do such things at camp are a tiny minority, but their activities tend to erode morale for everyone. We do look at each situation individually, and make a great effort not to shame anyone in the process of handling disciplinary stuff, but it is important to us to protect the NBTSC community and environment. (And on the personal front, we tend to resent having to spend a lot of our time tracking down 1 or 2 people who are creating serious problems, and thus not having time to do the jobs we have prepared for, and looked forward to, all year.)

Yes, it breaks our hearts, but approximately once every year or two, approximately one camper is asked to leave. We do our best to make sure that no one leaves on bad terms and, believing in people's capacity to change and grow, we're usually willing to start over with a clean slate the next year. In fact, we have had several campers eventually become staffers after once being sent home.

If you violate a major camp agreement, then you and your family are responsible for all travel expenses and other responsibilities incurred. We generally require campers to leave the property within a few hours after we decide they need to go. Yes, it can cost a lot to change airline tickets at the last minute. Yes, it can be a major pain for a parent to immediately abandon their beach vacation

to come get you early. Yes, it can be confusing and scary to make hotel reservations in an unfamiliar city. It's up to you to prevent these possibilities from becoming realities.

Thanks for reading that last section ~ we don't like to write these gnarly little notes and we know they apply to almost nobody. Thing is, when they do end up applying to somebody it's important that we've been clear from the outset. We also hope that these words might help avert, now and then, a stray plan to be-a-pain-in-everybody's-butt.



The agreements

You must be willing to keep our agreements in order to come to NBTSC—here’s the current edition. (This is the “short” version. We also post a long version—with more details, explanation, and context—at camp and in the “NBTSC Camper Handbook Extras,” accessible via our [fine print](#) page.) There may be edits before this year’s camp, but no major changes are expected.

Take care of yourself, participate in the camp community, and get the most out of camp that you can

- Come to NBTSC only if you want to, not just because your parents or friends think you should.
- Help co-create and renew our legendary culture of kindness, honesty, trust, openness, cooperation, safety, and all-around radical goodness. We collectively agree to engage with one another, to form a community that excludes no one.
- Stay within the daytime and nighttime boundaries.
- Participate in morning meeting, advisee group, and evening meeting each day.
- Take responsibility for your own well-being.
- No smoking or tobacco use without written parental permission.
- Cooperate with any additional agreements the staff needs to request.
- Do your best to have a wonderful time and to help others have a wonderful time too.

Take care of each other and respect differences and boundaries

“Each other” means all campers, staff, visitors, and folks who live and work on site.

- Respect others of all backgrounds and identities.
- Respect others’ boundaries.
- Watch out for each others’ health and avoid spreading germs.
- Speak helpfully. Don’t gossip.
- Make it easy for others to sleep and rest.
- Stay out of others’ cabins and tents.
- Share the air. (We’re mindful about amplified music and chemical fumes, such as from toiletries.)
- But do not share smoke. (No sharing tobacco or cigarettes.)
- Pay attention ~ watch our pre-camp videos, read our stuff, and listen during meetings.
- If you interact with others in the camp community throughout the year (not just at NBTSC), keep it kind and respectful.
- Follow common sense rules of courtesy, kindness, and safety.

Take care of the environment

- Respect the natural environment, buildings, and other surroundings.
- Before using hair dye (indoors or out), get site guidelines from the staff logistics coordinator and follow them rigorously.

Engage in a way that will allow camp to continue in future years

- When you experience or are aware of problems at camp, tell a staff person.
- Don’t have sex.
- Keep your clothes on.
- No illegal substances.
- Follow NBTSC swimming rules.
- Observe any additional rules that are set by our sites.

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*NBTSC Sexual Assault Policy

This policy is a living document. It will evolve as NBTSC evolves.

NBTSC staff and administration is committed to

- preventing sexual assault, harassment, and other boundary violations via education, clear policies, and an atmosphere that welcomes victims to come forward;
- encouraging full, immediate, and honest reporting of any sexual assault, harassment, and other boundary violations; responding helpfully and thoroughly to such reports;
- protecting and supporting victims of sexual assault, and those who report incidents of sexual assault (if they are different individuals);
- when relevant and necessary, also advocating for alleged perpetrators' rights (such as not to be subjected to inaccurate gossip).

At each session of camp we provide education, support, and response

Education

- A mandatory presentation regarding consent and sexual assault, at the start of each session (and/or prior to each session, via video)

Support

- NBTSC staff is chosen largely for their approachability and openness so that campers feel safe going to them. All staff are instructed to be available; campers are told all staff are available.
- Campers are told that in cases of sexual assault, they are granted immunity from disciplinary action. This is to encourage them to report without fear of disciplinary consequences.
 - For example, if they were assaulted while intoxicated, camp staff will not take disciplinary action regarding the drug or alcohol use although these are prohibited at NBTSC.
- A staff "consent" team (or individual "consent consultant") available specifically to talk about consent- or assault-related questions or concerns
- Other staff roles also intended to offer overall support and availability:
 - nurse or lay "mama bear"
 - advisor assigned to each camper
 - night watch person
 - at some sessions, a counselor or "listener"

Response

- When allegations of sexual assault, harassment, or other boundary violations arise, administrators and other staff engage as needed to resolve the situation to the best of our ability.
- When a camper, camp parent, or staffer reports allegations, we report back to them in some way. There is often personal information that must be kept confidential, but we intend to at least communicate back with a general update.
- If a situation indicating mandatory legal reporting were to arise, camp staff would make reports (such as to Child Protective Services) as necessary.

During the off season, camp administrators also encourage reporting, and respond as needed

- We understand that campers might choose not to report an incident until after camp. While we intend and attempt to respond to any form of communication that lets us know there has been a problem, we encourage you to follow our official policy:
 - Email our camp office (NotBackTo@gmail.com) or our NBTSC Executive Director, Grace Llewellyn (GraceLlewellyn@gmail.com). Include the words "incident report" in your subject line.
 - We intend to respond within one week (preferably sooner), and to take further action as needed.

Also see "What to do if you experience (or hear of) problems at camp," next page.

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*What to do if you experience (or hear of) problems at camp

In 3 words: *talk to us!*

Campers' physical and emotional safety is important to us. If something unhealthy happens, we want to know so we can offer support—and if needed, intervene or otherwise create change.

We care about anything that is undermining your safety, or that is disrespecting your humanity. Here's a partial list of things we care very much about:

- Racism ~ racist jokes and comments, etc.
- Also: sexist, fatphobic, body shaming, classist, antisemitic, Islamophobic, ableist, transphobic, homophobic, ageist, etc. comments or jokes
- Prejudicial or intolerant comments based on who a person is, even if they do not belong to a marginalized category. (For example, it's not okay to put someone down or ridicule them for being a cisgender white man, or for being Christian, or heterosexual. If there is a problem with a person's behavior, we encourage you to address that, but it's not okay to put a person down for their identity.)
- Sexual assault and other unwanted physical contact. We take it seriously whether it's verbal harassment, kissing, overt sexual contact, etc. We ask campers to get verbal consent before making overtures like kissing, etc.
 - See our sexual assault policy for our more official language on this topic.

Sometimes people say the wrong thing or make another mistake out of ignorance, and so sometimes our approach focuses on raising awareness (such as by having a significant conversation with them) and expecting them to make amends—rather than on punishing or shaming them. Some of our campers are quite young—emotionally and socially as well as in years. It has also been our experience that campers who make mistakes are frequently either neurodivergent, or have a mental health disorder, or have an intellectual disability—and such context also influences our approach. (Others may not be aware of such issues, and in the interest of respecting privacy we may choose not to disclose them.) Societal expectations can also change rapidly. For these reasons we may not react with harshness when a mistake is made (to the disappointment of some folks).

On the other hand, if a person were to be deliberately bullied or assaulted we would not hesitate to take more dramatic action, such as immediately sending a camper home. We are deeply committed to protecting victims of sexual harassment or assault, hate speech, and other wrongs. (By “we” we mean both NBTSC on a policy and administrative level, and also the many individual staff members who have a strong personal interest in social justice.)

Naturally we have more power to help if we find out right away, *during* camp, that you are experiencing a problem. If for any reason you don't choose to share with us during camp, please don't hesitate to let us know later about your experience. The more information you share, then the more likely we will be able to prevent similar problems in the future, and the more our community will be able to evolve.

We receive all kinds of commentary and feedback on camp, throughout the year. If you have a problem to report please help make sure that it gets proper attention by following this protocol:

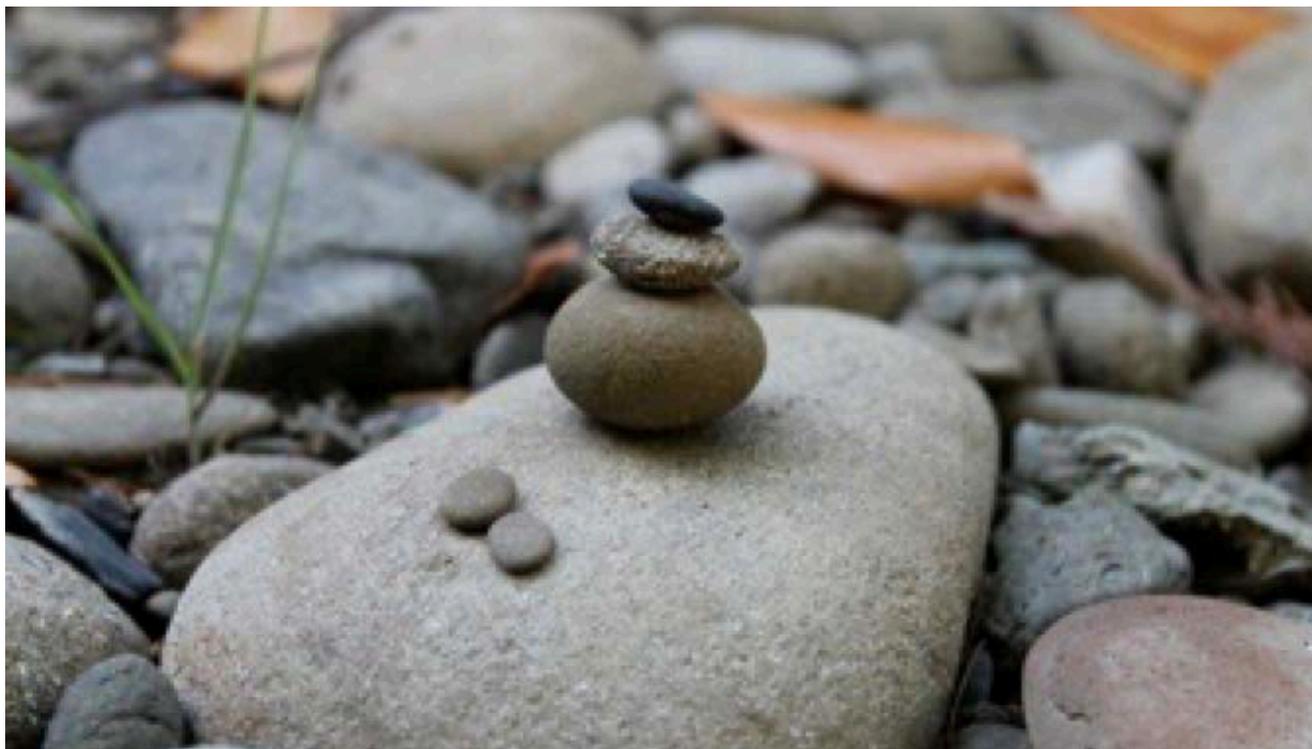
- Describe what happened in an email to our Executive Director, Grace Llewellyn (GraceLlewellyn@gmail.com), and/or to our Camper Liaison, Maya Toccata (NotBackTo@gmail.com).
- Please don't include anything else in that email—focus it on the specific problem you want to report.
- Include the words “incident report” in the subject header. (Even if what you are sharing doesn't feel exactly like a specific incident, this is the best way to make sure we understand clearly that you are reporting a problem that needs focused attention.)

We will get back to you. The intention is to respond within one week, but when we're really busy (close to or during a camp session) or when our office hours are extremely limited (such as during parts of the winter), it may be longer. If you don't hear back promptly, you're welcome to check in to make sure that your report has been received.

Thank you for helping us to support you and to improve NBTSC for everyone!

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Transgender & gender diverse support



NBTSC is blessed by the frequent presence of gender non-conforming campers, and over the years we've gradually learned more about being courteous and welcoming. This is an evolving journey for NBTSC, but for now here's where we find ourselves: our general policy is to include trans folks in the cabins that match their gender identity (when that's what they want). Women's and men's bathrooms are open to all who identify as such. We also designate all-gender bathrooms.

We also offer all-gender cabins for anyone who would be most comfortable in a cabin not labeled "male" or "female." In the past there has been some confusion, so to clarify: even if you are cisgender (your gender identity matches your biological or "assigned at birth" sex) you are welcome to sign up for an all-gender cabin if that is your preference—don't worry that you're "taking away" a spot from someone else. If we do run out of beds we'll problem-solve at that point, prioritizing campers who identify as non-binary or trans. Tell us what kind of cabin you want via your online account.

All-gender cabins are not, however, offered as an opportunity to sleep with your sweetie. Given our responsibilities as adults running a youth event, we cannot allow bed sharing, and we make an effort not to co-house campers who are romantically involved—regardless of gender configuration. Campers who want to sleep near others more cozily must do so in public group sleeping spaces rather than in cabins. (But, public group sleeping spaces may not always be on offer, or may be outdoors-only. And even in group sleeping areas each camper must sleep in their own individual sleeping bag or other personal bedding.)

Parents should know that occasionally campers change their minds regarding which type of cabin they prefer. Aside from our attempt to not place romantically-involved campers together, our policy is to respect campers' choices (and not to consult parents before making changes). That said, there is not always space available to change cabins once we are at camp. (More about cabins on our [Oregon Sleeping Arrangements](#) and [Vermont Sleeping Arrangements](#) pages.)

Not everyone wants to talk about their gender, so if you're a trans or gender non-conforming person it's up to you whether you bring that up with us—prior to camp or during. We just want you to know that if you want to communicate with us about how we can support you at camp, we're available. (Prior to camp, "we" would mean an NBTSC admin such as session directors, Maya, or Grace; during camp, any staff or directors you wish to talk with.)

Conversely, if you are not trans or non-binary, and are concerned that you might feel awkward or accidentally offend someone in a cabin or bathroom that included trans or non-binary folks, you are also welcome to contact us. We're happy to talk through your concerns.

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Teach a Workshop!

Workshops are the backbone of NBTSC, and it's awesome to watch (and partake in) the incredible energy of 60-130 people sharing all kinds of stuff with each other. **We encourage you to offer a workshop!**

Back in the early days of NBTSC, *most* campers taught workshops—even brand new campers, regardless of their age. We would love to recapture that magic! In recent years some campers have said that leading a workshop sounds “scary” and they don’t want to try it until they’ve come to NBTSC for a year or two. And it’s up to you if you don’t want to, now or ever. But workshops are a wonderful way to participate in NBTSC. We highly recommend going for it!

All you have to do to sign up to teach a workshop is.... sign up to teach a workshop! You can sign up before camp or during camp. There are good reasons for either.

Sign up before camp

You’ll run into a prompt while you’re completing your online info.

Why to sign up before camp

- If you’ll need a dance floor, boom box or PA, piano, or other limited resources, signing up in advance makes it way more likely that you’ll have **easy access to what you need**
- Once you’re at camp, no need to divert mental/emotional energy to the question of whether you should teach a workshop, and on what topic, or when—**the decision has been made**
- It’s still **okay to back out or change your plans**. Though it’s not ideal when a *lot* of workshops are canceled or changed to a different time, it’s okay to do either of those things at camp if you need to. To change or cancel a workshop at camp: just cross out your workshop on the wall schedule. Do this neatly so someone else can write a different workshop into that space. If you want, you can find a different time/space where there’s an opening, and write your workshop into that blank. Please make these changes as soon as possible, and definitely **before breakfast that morning**. (That’s because we go over the day’s workshops during morning meeting, and because a lot of people visit the wall schedule during breakfast to plan out their day.)

- **Advance signups** also **help us** (staff) **create a balanced schedule** that flows nicely

- Many **people like to look over the whole schedule** right at the start of camp, to get a sense of what’s on offer for the duration, and start making plans

Sign up at camp

You can just hand-write your workshop (and your name) into any blank space on the workshop schedule.

Why to wait and sign up at camp

If you feel anxious or uncertain about teaching a workshop, it can be nice to leave yourself the no-pressure option to sign up after you’re at camp, when you have a better idea of how you want to engage. Many campers do it this way.

Helpful tips we’ve gathered over the years

- Teach something you **love!**
- You **don’t have to be an expert** to teach a workshop. Beginners can be excellent workshop teachers. Build on your personal understanding of the ways that beginners might be confused, and questions they’re likely to have. And of course, be honest about your level of expertise.
- **The most satisfying workshops are often those in which people do things together** (like learn a dance, or try a new skill) **or take turns talking about their lives** (like a space for people to share their experience with the pandemic, or talk about their unschooling highlights and challenges). Discussions, on the other hand—in which people mostly converse about their opinions—can sometimes be frustrating, and harder to facilitate.
- It’s community-building to **ask participants to introduce themselves** (such as their names plus why they decided to come to this workshop).

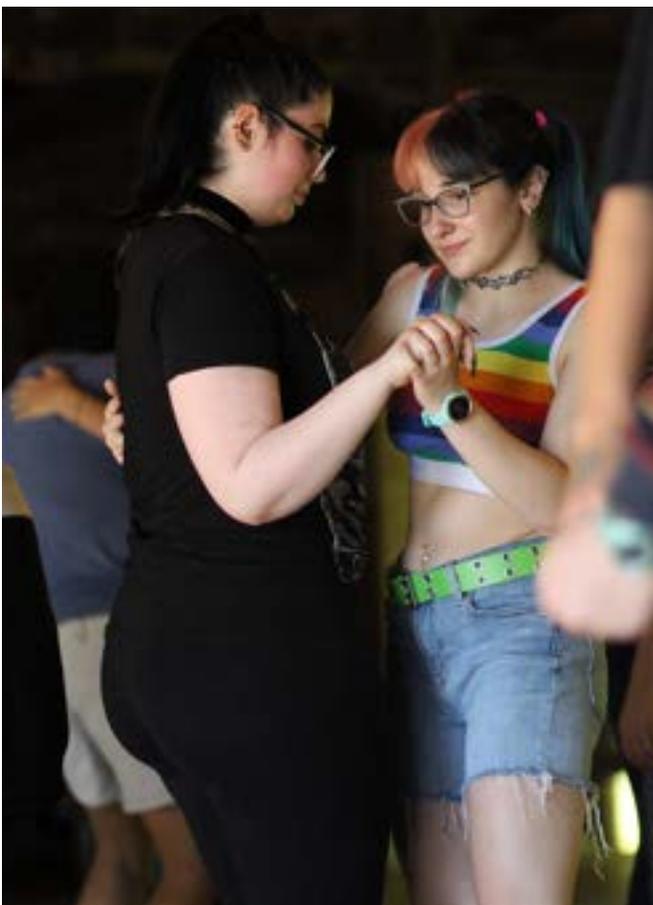


Photo by Zoe Newmarco, Vermont 2019

- It's important to **begin on time**, or close to on-time. (At least be in your location on time, so people who'd like to attend aren't confused.)
- It's even more important to **end on time**. You want your group to have the luxury of a relaxed transition from the end of your workshop to the next event they'll participate in. Pro tip: set an alarm for 5 minutes before ending, so you can take that last 5 to wind up in a non-chaotic way.
- If you need **supplies**, we can usually provide ordinary and inexpensive art and office supplies (such as paper, pencils/pens, markers, scissors, crayons, glue, stapler, etc.), a boom box or speaker for music (connects to phones/etc.), basic sports equipment, etc. If you need more extensive supplies, please bring them. Usually we also ask that you take any leftover supplies home with you, though we occasionally accept donated supplies for future years.
- Workshops and games generally run **50 minutes**. Occasionally we can accommodate a longer event, especially if you contact us ahead of time. Many groups make plans to get together again later or to continue a conversation over dinner.
- Some workshop topics work well in our mostly-outdoor setting, and others don't. If you need a **table** or a **large floor space** or a **piano**, we can usually provide that. (Especially if you sign up before camp.) **Most workshops take place outside**, sitting in a circle on the ground or at a picnic table. Sorry, no kitchen workshops.
- You **can limit your workshop** if you wish. Some people limit their workshops to approximately 10-15 participants. It's also okay to restrict your workshop to people who already have particular skills or knowledge. For example, you could host a Spanish language lunch table for people who already know at least a little bit of Spanish and want to practice together. (Of course, the fewer restrictions, the more people have the option to participate.)
- We want to be mindful about **cultural appropriation**. We don't have a rule that you can't share something you've learned from another culture (music, dance, art, etc.), but context and approach is important, especially when your content comes from a culture that has been exploited or oppressed. If this feels confusing, we'd love to communicate with you ahead of time.
- **Don't spend so much time preparing that you'll be devastated if only a few people (or even no one) comes.** All of us take risks at camp. No one is required to attend workshops, and although most campers attend numerous workshops, sometimes they get worn out, or have a hard time choosing between all the options. Please don't take it personally if it turns out people are more interested in playing in the water during your workshop slot. (A staffer says: "Speaking for myself, I've taught many workshops at NBTSC, and the number of people attending has ranged from 0 to 50ish.") If you work hard to prepare, we suggest you give your workshop elsewhere before or after camp, perhaps to other homeschoolers, or in a school or at your church, so your efforts won't feel wasted if no one or only a few people attend at camp. It's an experiment! Have fun getting ready.

What to teach?

Here are a few possibilities to get your imagination going. Just about anything goes—as long as it works in our mostly-outdoor setting, doesn't require extravagant supplies (unless you are willing to buy and bring them), and doesn't violate camp agreements.

- get to know one another—bring a focused question or topic like "What's easy and hard about being you?" or "Family traditions—what we love and what we dread." Make time for everyone to share.
- self-directed learning—share what you've learned about being in charge of your own education, or create a forum for participants to address a topic like "how I schedule my unschooling days."
- dance, yoga, martial arts
- drama, magic, juggling, performance art
- music, singing, drumming, etc.
- writing, poetry, journaling
- all kinds of inexpensive and/or simple arts and crafts
- languages—songs, beginning conversational skills, etc.
- massage, meditation, other healing stuff
- math tricks/rapid math, alternative math, logic games and puzzles
- science projects
- nature/wilderness skills and exploration
- soccer, volleyball, basketball, softball, ultimate frisbee, etc.
- hide and seek, capture the flag, freeze tag, twister, board games, a chess tournament...
- facilitate an event—poetry slam, face painting, dance jam, spelling bee, quilting bee...

Past workshops have included solar cooking, kung fu, orienteering, yoga, Zimbabwean singing, college applications for self-directed learners, website design, surrealist games, Bharata Natyam dance, VW engine fixing, drama, writing poetry, getting published and self-publishing, human digestion, origami, art booklets, swing dancing, youth rights, tree identification, songwriting, conscious communication, suicide prevention, beading, photography, ballet, Argentine tango—and hundreds more.

How to invite people to your workshop

- You'll have the opportunity to **announce** your workshop—or even to give a quick demo or presentation—up to 1 minute. Aim not only to entice people to attend, but also to give us a little nugget we can use right away, or that opens a conceptual window for us.
- Consider making a small **poster** advertising your workshop. When you arrive at camp, find out when your workshop has been scheduled and add those deets to your poster. Post it for all to see.



Photo by Brenna McBroom, Vermont 2023

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Talent Shows

"There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost, the world will not have it." - Martha Graham

NBTSC has fantastic evening talent shows, and you are invited to participate! Almost anything goes—play the piano, tap dance, invite the audience to give you math problems and solve them in your head, sing, do stand-up comedy, turn cartwheels, juggle lemons, tell us the wildest thing that ever happened to your family, read your poetry or a very short story, or just tell us what makes you tick. Some campers and staff show us what they love in the talent show, and then teach it later in a workshop.

Each act gets up to 4 minutes—occasionally more is okay if you clear it with us ahead of time. Each person performs just once, unless they're also assisting with (not starring in) someone else's act.

Generally, you can count on a PA system or other amplifier being available (plays from phones or similar devices; sometimes plays CDs). And willing helpers of all kinds (to move chairs, hold mikes, press "play" on your music, etc.). Often, it's also easy to rustle up a guitarist or pianist to accompany your singing—or actors for your skit, backup singers for your band, etc.



Photo by Skye P, Oregon 2023

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Prom

Each session of camp features a prom. Often it's referred to with quotation marks in the voice for irony: "*prom*." No date, pretensions, or expensive clothes necessary. It's a fun, celebratory dance and all are welcome, exactly as they are.

Every prom has a theme, chosen by recent and/or current campers. We enthusiastically encourage you to dress in theme if that sounds fun, and many campers do so. But there's no obligation ~ you're equally welcome in your favorite jeans or a vintage tux.

For 2025, the Oregon prom theme is *Garden*. The Vermont prom theme is TBA—you'll receive an email announcement at least one month before camp starts.

At camp, volunteers can join the prom committee and help make decorations, plan and set up the space, etc. Even if you don't want to be on the committee, you're still welcome to create or prepare and bring theme-oriented decorations from home if you'd like. (But, unless you're driving to camp, it could be challenging to fit such items into your luggage. And we don't want prom to generate a crazy amount of trash.) We especially encourage DIY or homemade decorations.

Campers are welcome to request songs, usually prior to prom rather than during. Typically a staff DJ or a committee curates the playlist—shooting for a great dance mix that will please as many people as possible as much of the time as possible.



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Bring a Film for the Film Festival!

At most sessions we host a one-night film festival. If you have created a short film you'd like to share, please [email Grace](#) prior to camp, **by August 1**—include a brief description, the length, and if it's not too big, attach a file. (Or if available online—youtube, vimeo, facebook, etc.—send a link. We may then ask you to bring a file with you to camp.)

If you miss the deadline, you can still bring your film to camp—but in that case we will definitely need an actual file (such as on a flash drive), not just a link, because internet access is unreliable at camp. We'll include you if we can and there is space available.

We are open to a wide range of films

- your music videos
- the short screenplay you wrote and brought to life
- a short documentary (that you made) on a subject that fascinates you
- a well-curated slide show ~ of your paintings, your surfing safari or your hitchhike through Croatia, your photography, etc.
- personal films—we think it would be really cool if a bunch of campers brought **well-edited 3- 5-minute "a day in my life"** videos.

The only thing we definitely don't want is barely edited or raw video footage (unless, *maybe*, it is super-short and the subject matter for some reason is just perfect for camp). We don't need slick or state of the art, but we do need enough thoughtful editing that viewers feel that their time and attention has been respected.



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Bring your Art for the Art Extravaganza

At both sessions we host a one-night art show. Artists of all kinds, we need your creations! We'd love to display something you've made, drawn, painted, calligraphed, sculpted, designed, patched, knitted, welded, sewn, carved, etched... and that isn't so precious that you'd be devastated if something happened to it. (Though to our knowledge, nothing has ever been damaged during the art show.)

Don't worry, of course, that you need to have won accolades or first prize ribbons in order to participate. Or that your work must fall into some narrow definition of "art." Just bring anything you've created that you love or find interesting or that was fun for you to make, and that you are willing to bring along for the journey.



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*Leaving camp part-way through

Can you leave camp if you're homesick or don't like it? Yes, but it's a pain for everyone (you, us, your parents, your new friends), so we strongly suggest that you only come to camp if you are pretty sure you want to be there.

If you arrive and find yourself pining for your own bed or your dad's enchiladas, we urge you to stick it out for at least two or three days—most bouts of homesickness pass. Please talk to us! Of course we won't pressure you to stay if you ultimately choose to leave. Meanwhile, though, as long as you're with us, you may find that settling in for a cozy chat with a staffer—or with other homesick campers—is enormously reassuring.

We do tend to support a camper's decision to leave, though occasionally parents would prefer that we be a little more forceful about keeping them at camp. If you do opt to leave, you'll probably need to arrange for your parents (or someone else that they authorize, unless you're 18+) to pick you up.

Parents, if you think there's a good chance your child will be overwhelmed and decide to leave, you might consider driving them to camp and then staying in the general area—at least for a couple days.

What if you're sick at camp? Can you leave? Do you have to leave? You can choose to leave (with your parents' support). If we feel that you are so sick or contagious as to endanger yourself or others, we may ask that you leave, and work out with your parents how that can best be facilitated. The most likely scenario in which this would occur is if someone arrived at camp already sick.

What if you break camp agreements and we send you home? That's a whole 'nother matter, and it breaks our hearts in a different way. Details on our [Agreements](#) page.

Sorry, there are no refunds when someone leaves camp part-way through. See our refund policy (<https://www.nbtsc.org/refund-policy/>) for details.



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*Superhero teams (a.k.a. chores)

Everybody helps out to get the work done.

We assign each camper to a “superhero” team. Each team is assigned to a task—such as washing dishes, cleaning the bathrooms, or tidying up the grounds. In Oregon sometimes we have a crew that helps the site managers with tasks like stacking firewood or maintenance projects.

If you have kitchen skills, or if you’ve worked in a restaurant, coffee shop, cafe, or cafeteria, you may want to join our sous chef or meal serving teams.

Most teams work together for 30 minutes or so before or after lunch or dinner most days. But some tasks need to be handled at different times.

If you’re an early riser and would prefer to join a before-breakfast team, that may be an option.

Share your preferences via your online NBTSC account.



Photo by Natalie D, Oregon 2024

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What to expect after camp is over

First, you may want to sleep a lot! Staff also needs to sleep a lot. Though we usually have a few post-camp announcements to share, **don't expect to hear from us for a week or two.**

We've learned over the decades that **transitioning home after NBTSC can be challenging** — not for everybody, but for many. We've collected some notes on this topic and we send them out to parents during each session. We talk with campers on the last couple days of the session about this stuff too. (If you — parents and/or campers — have advice or stories to share, please send them our way and we may integrate them into our notes or conversations. Thanks!)

A few key points (written especially with parents in mind, but perhaps helpful perspective for all):

We've noticed some patterns—things that commonly happen upon reentry, and things that seem to make homecoming easier and more positive. (We've also learned that these patterns are not unique to NBTSC—they are experienced by people of all ages reintegrating after many retreats and other transformative away-from-home experiences.) Campers (staffers too) sometimes go through a depressive post-camp period, for at least two reasons:

- First, they are coming down from a time of constant, often very physically affectionate, contact with a group of peers. These peers may have expressed enthusiastic adoration, and apparently understood them (as unschoolers, etc.) in a way that their local friends may not.
- Second, many campers leave camp with grand intentions for their lives. We think this is great, and yet we also caution that while big changes can begin immediately, they usually take time (sometimes years! decades!) to fully integrate. More than a few campers have been way too hard on themselves when they return home and fail to immediately transform into beings of pure love, light, talent, and success.

Things that often help

Allowing for a period of transition before expecting too much in the way of productivity. Providing an atmosphere of support and gentleness. (Your kids may already be experiencing internal pressure to attain unrealistic heights at unrealistic speeds.)

But at the same time, providing healthy structure (or supporting your kids in creating healthy structure for themselves):

- **Social contact!** Real-time, face-to-face social contact with friends and family is essential. For many campers, physical affection is also important. It may be time to seek out and build new friendships.
 - It's also really, really important to a lot of campers to maintain daily contact with other campers (often via social media, etc.). (But not such that they are constantly indoors, looking at a screen.) The camper community

can provide a wonderful source of support throughout the year. There are camper-run Discord channels (for Oregon and Vermont) which many campers participate in. (But NBTSC staff do not moderate these Discords and we aren't normally able to help resolve conflicts which arise there.)

- Getting into the swing of **regular rhythms**: Sleeping when it's dark, being up when it's light. Getting outside, especially when there's sunshine. Eating good food at regular intervals. Not too much sugar. Getting daily exercise. You know, all the boring basic stuff—which is easy to ignore when we're in transition or feeling down, but also especially important at those times.

On a hopeful note, we have heard from many parents over the years that while the post-camp period can be challenging, it can also be a wonderfully fertile time of growth—not only campers' individual growth but also the growth and renewal of family relationships and friendships. The weeks and months after camp often provide a window of opportunity to deepen family connections and perhaps to reconnect in a more physical, affectionate way.



Photo by Zoe JDP, Oregon 2024

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Oregon

Wednesday August 6 (5 p.m.) to Wednesday August 20 (8:30 a.m.)
Camp Myrtlewood ~ Bridge, Oregon



Photo by Andy Pearson, Oregon 2024

Important dates

details on the [“What we need from you and when we need it”](#) page

- **June 1:** all tuition due. Deadlines: T-shirt design contest, Culmination sign ups
- **July 1:** deadline to submit information via your online account (directory photo and bio, workshop plans, cabin preferences, health history, dietary needs, authorizations, etc.).
- **July 16 - August 6:** health prescreening via your online account
- **July 20:** travel info due via your online account (including bus reservations/payment)

Drop-off & pick-up times at Camp Myrtlewood

Drop-off between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. (Aug 6) **Pick-up** by 8:30 a.m. (August 20) *Also see [travel details for Oregon](#)*

Parent open houses

Also see [Open Houses and Visitors](#)

- **Arrival day** (Weds Aug 6): 5:00-5:30—tours led by staff, 5:30-6:00—meeting and Q/A with staff.
- **Saturday August 9th:** 3:00 to 8:45 p.m.

How to contact campers & staff at Camp Myrtlewood

Updates may be posted in the summer on our [“Contact Us”](#) web page. We may also share additional info in a pre-camp email.

Phone (urgent or important situations only): 541-572-5307. (Actual humans—the Camp Myrtlewood site managers—often answer this phone at all hours in case there is an incoming emergency call. Please take care not to call in the middle of the night if it's not an emergency.)

Mail: Name, c/o NBTSC, Camp Myrtlewood, 49658 Myrtle Creek Rd, Myrtle Point, OR 97458

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Field Trip to the Oregon Coast

Most campers have an excellent time on this optional trip. Participants leave on buses in the morning and return before dinner, and just about everyone returns bright-eyed and terribly glad they went. People spend their time at the beach pretty much however they want. Some go on long walks or hikes exploring the water's edge. Others play tag with the waves for hours, bury each other in sand, or sit in clumps—talking, singing, napping, playing games, building sandcastles. We bring lunch and snacks.



The specific destination depends on several factors including tides, weather, and which staffer is in charge of the trip. We usually choose either Sunset Bay State Park (near Coos Bay) or the spectacular beaches at Bandon (pictured here). For 2025, campers should know that **the field trip might set out earlier than in recent years**—meaning you'd need to wake up earlier. (Breakfast would still be available.) The most likely reason for this would be to enjoy better, calmer weather at the coast. (Often there's no wind in the morning but it picks up throughout the day, occasionally to the point that folks get frustrated with sand blown in their faces, etc.) And, one time we left super-early to take advantage of a spectacularly low tide opportunity for exploring.

Reasons not to go? Save \$40, avoid spending several hours on the bus (though most people enjoy the opportunity for conversation), don't get sunburned, have access to indoor spaces regardless of weather. There are sometimes other low-key adventure opportunities, that same day, for those who don't go—staff may lead a long hike, or organize a service project for Camp Myrtlewood, etc.

Possible stop in town—up to \$25 is an ideal amount of spending money.

We often make a stop in Bandon's picturesque, touristy waterfront Old Town. We request that you bring only a small to moderate amount of spending money, such as \$25 or less. Larger amounts sometimes result in way too much candy brought back to camp. They also serve as an unpleasant reminder that outside of camp, some folks have access to a lot of money and others very little.

Staff may offer an alternate-to-town activity such as a hike. (Especially if we know that there's a group of campers who would appreciate this option—so, don't hesitate to tell us if you're interested!)

If you decide to go

Cost is \$40. Sign up and pay via your online account. (The field trip is an "add-on" option—to access add-ons, go to your "registrations" tab and click on the Oregon session.)

Parts of the Oregon coastline are notoriously dangerous with

undertows, frigid water, and such. **This is not a swimming trip**—you're welcome to wade, but not swim. And you must cooperate with any additional limits set by staff.

Bring: an extra towel, strong sunscreen, flip-flops or other beach shoes if you want them, shoes you can both hike and be wet in (like chacos, tevas, or high-traction rainboots), a windbreaker, fleece or wool clothes (or other clothing that is warm even when wet), a water bottle.

We may (or may not) have spots available at the last minute. If you don't want to commit, but leave open the possibility if there is space available on the bus, make sure to complete the online authorization. Then at camp, if there's still room, you can sign up. You must have cash or venmo/paypal (\$40) available.

If you reserve a spot and change your mind at camp you don't have to go, but we don't offer refunds (even if a friend volunteers to take your spot).

photo by Aaliyah, 2024

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Camp Myrtlewood

We're so fortunate to spend beautiful late-summer days at this lovely spot, supported by wonderful long- and short-term residential site staff. For over 25 years, we have been deeply inspired both by their stewardship of Camp Myrtlewood's natural environment, and also by their commitment to social justice and to living in harmony with their beliefs.

See <http://campmyrtlewood.org> for more information on

- Camp Myrtlewood
- Camp Myrtlewood's unique, exemplary, and extensive ecostewardship program
- opportunities to offer financial support (they do a lot with very little)



Photo by Ethan B, Oregon 2024

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*Oregon Travel Details



Photo by Fred, Oregon 2023

You can drive directly to Camp Myrtlewood, or you can meet our buses in Eugene—at the Amtrak station (which also serves Greyhound), at the airport, or at Monroe Park. Reserve and pay for a bus seat via your online account by July 20. (Go to the registrations tab and click on the Oregon session—that will take you to the “add-on” options including bus rides and merch.) Please don’t change your plans without letting us know. If you show up at the wrong place we may accidentally leave you behind, or you may delay our departure.

How to recognize us

We’ll watch for you, and our meeting places are small and easy to navigate. Our staff wears NBTSC T-shirts. If you’re new to NBTSC, chances are good you will connect en route with returning campers.

Arrival Day can be a bit stressy & confusing, so

- Pack in an accessible bag: hoodie or jacket, lunch and/or snacks, water bottle, your phone or a watch, and any necessary medications. Our first meal will be dinner, at about 7:00 p.m.
- Use a restroom before you get on our bus. We do not normally make stops during the drive, which is approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes.
 - But if the bus does stop and you need to get off, it’s essential to return promptly.

What if you get into Eugene late, and miss us?

If you’re driving, meet us at Camp Myrtlewood. We can’t wait for late folks to meet us at Monroe Park. (But you might swing by there in case the buses haven’t left, or give us a call to see if the buses are still loading elsewhere in town.) Sorry, if you do miss the bus we cannot refund your fee.

If your train/bus/plane is running late, call the number(s) listed on our [contact page](#), leaving a clear and detailed message if you don’t reach us directly. We’ll have a staff person stay and wait for you, or deal with it another way. (Despite airline strikes, fogged-in airports and delayed-till-the-next-day flights, lost luggage, and other mishaps, we’ve always managed to get everyone to camp. No need to worry!)

Arrival

Amtrak train, Amtrak bus, or Greyhound bus

All of these arrive at the Eugene Amtrak station. Arrive by 1:00 if possible, 3:00 at the latest. **Important:** Amtrak *trains* into Eugene (not Amtrak buses) are usually late (sometimes extremely late), so do check that your train reliably *actually* arrives (regardless of *scheduled* arrival time) by around 1:00.

Arriving by air

Arrive at the Eugene airport by 2:30 p.m. (If you contact us to see if we can accommodate you, you may be able to arrive as late as 3:30, but we strongly discourage arriving later than 2:30, and you absolutely must not make plans to do so before [contacting us](#). Later arrivals often involve a staffer making a separate trip to the airport in their car.)

Don't worry about finding us—the Eugene airport is small. Just go ahead and get your baggage and then you might meet and chat with other campers. As long as you're in the baggage claim area or immediately outside (on the sidewalk or hanging out in a group on the grass next to the baggage claim end of the small airport), we'll find you.

In the past few years more and more flights have been delayed, so **we encourage you to book a flight that is scheduled to arrive earlier than necessary, and without any tightly scheduled connecting flights.**

A note about traveling with airlines that require “unaccompanied minor” status for your age bracket: although we understand that from the airlines' (and some parents' and maybe some campers') perspectives they are just offering extra help, this adds an extra layer of logistics that can be frustrating for campers, parents, and our staff. If you're flying as an unaccompanied minor, let us know ASAP. However, on our end we may not know who exactly will pick you up (or drop you off) until the day of travel. We suggest that if possible, you avoid traveling as an unaccompanied minor.

Flying into Portland

Sometimes (but not always) it's considerably cheaper to fly into Portland than into Eugene. (Portland is 100 miles north of Eugene.) Of course, that also means you add one more leg to your journey, and one more opportunity for Murphy's law to kick in.

In the past, many campers have taken Amtrak (train or bus) to Eugene after flying into Portland. Several shuttle companies run from the airport to the train station; check the internet for current information. (If you're up for navigating public transportation, the “Max” is cheaper than a shuttle; see the [trimet](#) web page. This does require an approximately 5-minute walk—0.2 miles—which, with giant amounts of luggage, can be daunting.)

Another option, with which we are not very familiar, but may be superior, is the Groom Transportation shuttle, which runs every couple hours directly between Eugene and the Portland airport: <https://groomtransportation.com/>

Obviously, if you plan to fly into Portland you'll need to make sure that your schedule leaves plenty of room both to connect with your transportation from Portland and also to meet our buses in Eugene on time. We can't take any responsibility for getting you to camp from Portland if your flight is late and you aren't able to arrive in Eugene on time.

Traveling by car ~ options

- **Meet us at Monroe Park** in Eugene, Oregon:
 - Make (and pay for) a bus reservation via your online account, and arrive at Monroe Park no later than 2:00. Monroe Park is just west of downtown. It's small (one city block), and an easy place to find each other. Phone/internet directions will get you to Monroe Park.
 - We ask that drivers not meet our buses at the airport or Amtrak station in Eugene. It's just easier to have the extra room to organize at Monroe Park.
 - Important: as soon as our Monroe Park bus is loaded and ready to go, it will leave. This could be at 2:30 p.m. or it could be at 4:00 p.m., but it can't wait for late drivers. If you get to Monroe Park after 2:00 and we're gone, drive on to Camp Myrtlewood. (It's about 2.5 hours from Eugene to Camp Myrtlewood.) Or, call us to see if you can catch up with a bus at another location in Eugene. Sorry, no refunds if you miss the bus.
- **Be dropped off at Camp Myrtlewood** between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. at Camp Myrtlewood (not earlier, please!). Phone/internet directions should suffice, but we've also provided directions below.
- **Drive yourself to Camp Myrtlewood**, arriving between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. See our important notes and requirements for self-driving campers on our main [travel page](#).

Directions to Camp Myrtlewood

From I-5 just South of Roseburg, take the Winston/Dillard exit into Winston, then travel WEST on Highway 42 almost 50 miles to the tiny town of Bridge. Turn LEFT onto Myrtle Creek Road and go approximately three miles to Camp Myrtlewood (on your RIGHT).

From 101, take Highway 42 (five miles south of Coos Bay) EAST to the Bridge Junction (very roughly 30 miles), and turn RIGHT onto Myrtle Creek Road, and go approximately three miles to Camp Myrtlewood (on your RIGHT).

If you're bicycling to Eugene (*but not all the way to Camp Myrtlewood*)

Meet us at Monroe Park. Stash your bike somewhere safe beforehand; no room for bikes on our buses.

Departure

Getting picked up at Camp Myrtlewood

If someone picks you up at Camp Myrtlewood, they should arrive by 8:30 a.m. If they haven't arrived by the time our buses leave, you may need to travel back to Monroe Park on the bus (and pay for your seat), since we are responsible for getting everyone out of Camp Myrtlewood. If your driver is just running a bit late of course they should call us to check in, but cell access is sketchy in the vicinity of Camp Myrtlewood. (Verizon is the most reliable carrier, in our experience.)

If you're under 18, you can be picked up by a custodial parent/guardian or by anyone listed in the "trusted contacts" section of your online account.

If parents/guardians want to change this info after the camp session has already begun, they should update the "trusted contacts" section and *also* notify us via phone or email, then wait for confirmation that we've received the update.

Traveling by bus, train, plane, or getting picked up in Eugene

If you've reserved a bus seat, you'll be dropped off at your preferred location: Amtrak station, airport, or Monroe park. You should be back in Eugene by approximately noon, but try to arrange your flight or other departure for 1 p.m. or later in case of snags. The buses go to Monroe Park last, so ask drivers to meet you there around 12:45 if they don't want to be kept waiting long. (But there are many factors at play on departure day, and the Monroe Park bus sometimes arrives much earlier, so if your driver doesn't mind waiting, they could show up as early as 11:00. There are excellent eateries nearby, such as Laughing Planet cafe and the superlative Sweet Life patisserie. It's also just a short stroll to downtown and the library, and Monroe Park is nestled in a walkable neighborhood packed with old bungalows and charming little gardens—not a terrible place to while away an hour or two.)

A staff person normally waits in the park with campers until at least 1:00 if needed. If you're under 18, you can be picked up at Monroe Park by a custodial parent/guardian or by anyone listed in the "trusted contacts" section of your online account.

If parents/guardians want to change this info after the camp session has already begun, they should update the "trusted contacts" section and *also* notify us via phone or email, then wait for confirmation that we've received the update.

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*Oregon sleeping arrangements ~ cabins, tents, outdoors

Most Oregon campers are assigned to cabins. When we run out of cabin space, we can usually welcome a handful of additional campers if they are willing to sleep in a tent. Tenting is also an option for anyone who would simply like more privacy and fresh air. You'll tell us about your needs and preferences in the "Cabins" step of your online account "Health and Pre-Camp Info" section.



Photo by Carmilla N, Oregon 2024

Cabin genders

Cabins are organized by gender—the choices are girls, boys, and all-gender. This means, for example, that all campers who identify as girls or women are welcome to sleep in a girls' cabin.

All-gender cabins are offered for anyone who would be most comfortable in a cabin not assigned to one gender. Even if you are cisgender (your gender identity matches your biological or "assigned at birth" sex) it's still okay to sign up for an all-gender cabin if that is your preference—don't worry that you're "taking away" a spot from someone else. If we do run out of beds we'll problem-solve at that point, prioritizing non-binary or trans campers who have asked for an all-gender cabin.

All-gender cabins are not, however, offered as an opportunity to sleep with your sweetie. Given our responsibilities as adults running a youth event, we cannot allow bed sharing, and we make an effort not to co-house campers who are romantically involved—regardless of gender configuration. Campers who want to sleep near others more cozily must do so in public group sleeping spaces rather than in cabins. (But, public group sleeping spaces may not always be on offer, or may be outdoors-only. And even in group sleeping areas each camper must sleep in their own individual sleeping bag or other personal bedding.)

Parents should know that occasionally campers change their minds regarding which type of cabin they prefer. Aside from our attempt to not place romantically-involved campers together, our policy is to respect campers' choices (and not to consult parents before making changes). That said, often there is not space available to change cabins once we are at camp.

Quiet and non-quiet cabins

One way to improve your chances of sleeping well is to request a **quiet cabin**. While *everyone* is expected to be quiet and keep the lights off during certain hours, quiet cabin folks usually cooperate extra well in this realm. Lights-out time also starts a little earlier, though you don't need to be in your cabin by a specific time.

Obviously, people in quiet cabins need to do their part to co-create a quiet, restful space for everyone.

Occasionally there aren't enough campers who want a quiet cabin so we don't designate any as "quiet." Also, cabin preferences are mostly first-come first-served, so it sometimes happens that campers who register later are assigned to quiet cabins even though they didn't request one—or the other way around.

See more about getting good sleep [here](#).

Tenting

Borrowing or bringing a tent rather than sleeping in a cabin is a great option, allowing for a closer connection to the forest, better air, and more privacy. If you'd like to tent, let us know via your online account. You can bring your own, or we probably have a loaner available. (Our loaners are mostly cozy little one-person pods. They're officially 2-person REI tents, but it's hard to imagine 2 people being comfortable in them. We definitely assign them to one camper only.) Tents are usually set up in a "tent village" at the edge of the field. If you'd prefer a more private spot, that might be an option—talk with staff and we'll try to help you find a place to your liking.

When we loan tents, we can also loan a minimalist sleeping pad or at least a couple yoga mats. (But feel free to bring something more substantial.) If you supply your own tent, we'll assume you also have your own sleeping pad—if not, please reach out and we'll see if we can rustle one up for you.

Outdoor sleeping

Many campers like to spend at least a night or two sleeping outdoors under the stars. They really are amazing, and the Perseid meteor shower is usually in full swing while we're in session. Camp Myrtlewood has a few loaner outdoor mattresses, but not enough for everyone. (NBTSC may also have a few extra yoga mats or skinny sleeping pads but again, not always enough to go around.) If you have your own camping pad that's easy to pack, and if you think you might like to sleep out, consider bringing it.

About the cabin cleanup extravaganza

In the middle of the Oregon session we pause for a sacred moment of cabin and tent-village cleanup. This once-mundane event has evolved into a unique-to-NBTSC burst of creativity, wildness, collaboration, and cutthroat competition. Everyone tidies and cleans their cabins (or tent area), and some go an extra mile (occasionally thousands of extra miles) to add themed decorations, dress up and roleplay, put on skits, etc. We've had murder mysteries, serene forest retreats, cheerleaders (or was it a sorority? Memory fails...), old Western saloons, alien landings, weird occult things, and so much more. A small crew of staff members inspects each cabin/tent area and awards points both for cleanliness and also for creativity. There is a winner, and sometimes even a prize.

We mention this for a couple reasons. First, sometimes brand new campers love to know about stuff like this before camp, even though there's absolutely nothing you need to do to prepare. Second—as much as we adore all-out efforts and over-the-top zaniness, we actually want to halt one aspect of cabin cleanup: **please do not bring disposable items** (such as yellow caution tape) to use for cabin cleanup staging. Generating a heap of messy waste and overfilling the trash sort of undermines the purpose of cleanup, and we want to inhabit Camp Myrtlewood in as sustainable way as possible.



Photo by Augi Moyer, Oregon 2024

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Vermont

Tuesday September 2nd (4:30 p.m.) to Thursday September 11 (10 a.m.)

Firefly Song @ Farm & Wilderness Camp ~ Plymouth, Vermont

Important dates

details on the [“What we need from you and when we need it”](#) page

- **June 1:** tuition due; deadlines: T-shirt design contest, Culmination sign ups
 - Also the deadline to let us know if you’re hoping for a van ride from (or to) **Philadelphia** or **Albany**. At the time of this writing we’re not sure whether this will be available.
- **July 1:** deadline to submit information online (health history, dietary restrictions, directory bio, workshop plans, cabin preferences, authorizations, etc.).
- **August 15:** travel info due via your online account (including reservations/payment for van pick-ups/drop-offs)
- **August 11- Sept 2:** health prescreening via your online account

Drop-off & pick-up times at Firefly Song

Also see [travel details for Vermont](#)

- Drop-off between 4:30 and 5:45 p.m. (September 2),
- Pick-up between 10:00 and 10:45 a.m. (Sept 11)

Parent open houses

Also see [Open Houses and Visitors](#)

- **Arrival day (9/2):** 5:00-5:30—tours led by staff, 5:30-6:00—meeting and Q/A with staff.
- **Sunday September 7th:** 10:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

How to contact campers and staff at Firefly Song

Further details may be posted in the summer on our [“Contact Us”](#) web page. We may also share additional info in a pre-camp email.

Phone (urgent or important personal calls—up to 130 people share; also to reach our logistics coordinator re travel plans or other logistics): 802-391-8720. If you don’t reach us, you can also try 802-422-3448 or 802-487-0399. For emergencies only, if you can’t reach us at those numbers, call the Farm & Wilderness Emergency Pager, 888-622-3276—ask for the “Operations Coordinator” and “Retreat Group.” Say you’re calling for someone at Not Back to School Camp, staying at Firefly Song, and be sure to leave a callback number.

Mail: *Camper Name*, c/o NBTSC, Firefly Song, 263 Farm & Wilderness Rd, Plymouth, VT 05056

Photo by Milo, Vermont 2019



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Firefly Song (at Farm and Wilderness)

Farm and Wilderness Firefly Song is a magical spot nestled on Woodward Reservoir in rural Vermont. We're lucky to spend our late summer days there, in a rich and unpredictable mix of sweet sunlight, determined rain, and sometimes very crisp nights. For more information on Farm and Wilderness and its own renowned summer camp program, see <http://www.farmandwilderness.org/>.

When NBTSC first came to Farm & Wilderness in 2006, Firefly Song was our original home there. (At the time, it was called "Indian Brook.") We loved the dock, the generous kitchen, the fireplace, and many other features of the site. Later we moved just down the road to Tamarack Farm, and we loved our ten years there also. We moved back to Firefly Song in 2023, which allows us the opportunity to hold NBTSC approximately two weeks earlier. We've often heard the feedback that an earlier session would work better for camp families, and we hope this helps make it easier for *you* to be with us!



Photo by Ollie A, Vermont 2024

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*Vermont Travel Details

Need a ride? How to reserve pick-ups & drop-offs

For a fee, we arrange for rides from/to:

- Bus and train stations in White River Junction
- Burlington International Airport
- Possibly ~ to be determined later in the spring or summer: Philadelphia, PA and/or Albany, NY

Reserve a ride in the “Add-Ons” section of your online account (go to your “Registration” tab and then click on the Vermont session to access add-ons), and also make sure to fill out your travel details by August 15. (But, reach out by *June 1* if you’re hoping for a van ride from/to Philadelphia or Albany. We don’t know at the time of this writing whether Philly/Albany transportation will be available this year.)

For additional specifics, see below under “arrival” and/or “departure”



Photo by Signe Constable, Vermont 2013

Arrival

Amtrak or bus—White River Junction

We’ll arrange for someone (usually a F&W van driver) to pick you up at the Amtrak or bus stop in White River Junction. You need to arrive by 3:30 p.m. Unless we contact you with a different pickup time, don’t wander far, so your ride can easily find you. (If you’re having trouble with our 3:30 arrival cutoff, pop down to [“Flying \(etc.\) from afar...”](#))

Air—Burlington International Airport (BTV)

If you fly into BTV we (or more likely a F&W van driver) can pick you up—arrive by 3:00 p.m.* Some campers fly into other airports, seeking out a local NBTSC host family who can transport them. (Sorry, we are unable to help with arranging these kinds of connections. Try using our online travel directory to communicate with others. There’s a link in the “Travel Information” step of your online account “Health and Pre-Camp Info” section.

**What if you’re flying from a long ways away and it’s extremely hard to arrive by 3:00 p.m.? We’ll try to work with you! Skip down to [“Flying \(etc.\) from afar...”](#)*

What if you get into White River Junction or the airport late?

If your mode of transport is delayed, call us at F&W Firefly Song (or at whatever number we have shared more recently on our “contact us” website page or through an email notification prior to camp). If no one answers, leave a message—we’ll check frequently. If needed, we’ll have a staffer stay and wait for you, or otherwise troubleshoot. (Despite airline strikes, fogged-in airports and delayed-till-the-next-day flights, lost luggage, and other mishaps, we’ve always managed to get everyone to camp in a relatively timely manner. No need to worry!)

Possibly ~ meet us in Philadelphia or Albany

Sometimes, we are able to arrange for a driver to pick up campers in Philly and Albany (and return them after camp). At the time of this writing (January), we don’t know whether this will be available for this year. This option is intended for campers who live in those cities and do not have access to rides or carpools, but if there is space available we can consider other campers (such as those flying in from elsewhere). Because we need to plan ahead, you must let us know by *June 1* (ideally sooner) whether this is something you are hoping for, and then we will let you know asap whether it’s a possibility and if so, how much it will cost. (It’s also okay to check in later to find out if there is still space available, but your chances are lower and the price may be somewhat higher.)

How to recognize us if we (or F&W staff) pick you up

We’ll watch for you, and all our meeting places are small enough that it won’t be a problem. Our staff wears NBTSC T-shirts; Farm and Wilderness van drivers wear F&W shirts. If you’re new to NBTSC, chances are you’ll meet returning campers who can help you spot us.

Arrival Day can be a bit stressful and confusing, so

- Pack in an accessible bag: hoodie or jacket, lunch and/or snacks, water bottle, your phone or a watch, and any necessary medications. Our first meal will be dinner, at about 7:00 p.m.
- If you're riding a F&W van, use a restroom before departure. We don't normally make stops.

Flying (etc.) from afar and having a hard time with our arrival time window?

Consider joining our early arrival Work Party! Sign up via "add-ons" in the "registration" section of your online account.

In the olden days, virtually all of our Vermont campers lived relatively close by, and most carpooled to camp or took the train or bus. But recently, after we've made a point of spreading the word about our Vermont camp, we've had a much more geographically diverse group. Which is fabulous ~ but we've also learned that it can be extremely challenging for campers flying from the West Coast and other distant locales to arrive by 3:00 p.m. (at least without having to spend the night in the airport or go through other ridiculous contortions). Hence, in 2024 we started experimenting with an early arrival "work party" opportunity for long distance travelers. These folks fly in the previous afternoon/evening. We pick them up at the Burlington Airport and the train/bus stations in White River Junction, between approximately 4:00 and 7:30 p.m. (depending on the collective reality of their arrival times). That evening they're warmly welcomed and shown to their cabins, fed dinner, and invited to wash dishes for half an hour or so. The next day is work party time—everybody helps in the kitchen and wherever else is needed. There's a \$75 fee for room/board plus the usual charge for airport or bus/train shuttle service. Staff is busy with meetings and prep work, and we're not able to offer orientations or fun activities before regular camp arrival time, but we're happy to have you around and to know that you don't have to sleep in an expensive hotel or on an unfriendly airport floor.

Traveling by car

Please drive directly to Firefly Song at Farm and Wilderness. **Arrive between 4:30 and 5:45 p.m., not earlier** without making special arrangements (see more below).

Our traffic control team will let you know where to park. (It's important that the F&W road is not blocked and that there is access for emergency vehicles.) As soon as you arrive you will check in and then you can start settling into your cabin. If it takes you a while to get unpacked and get your bed set up, or if you are new to camp and want to go on the 5 p.m. tour led by staff—and don't mind having some downtime before scheduled activities—you may want to arrive closer to 4:30. (You will be busy with camp activities—dinner in your advisee group and an opening ceremony—from 6:15 p.m. until about 9 p.m.)

If you drive yourself to camp, during the session you will need to leave your car approximately one mile away from our Firefly Song site, in the main Farm & Wilderness parking lot. Please also see our important notes for campers who drive themselves, on our main [travel page](#).

A very important note about arriving early (by car)

Please don't, without making special arrangements! Staff have commented that it is awkward and frustrating to have unexpected campers arrive while we are eating lunch or busy in staff orientation meetings. We like to have the time and free attention to give you a warm greeting and take care of all the necessary check-in business when you arrive. But we also need to have focused attention for each other and camp prep, before the session officially begins. *If you are driving yourself to camp or riding with another camper who is not a worktrader, don't arrive early, the end.* But if your parent (or whoever's driving) seriously needs to drop you off earlier, you can arrive as early as 2:00 p.m.— **if**

- you let us know via your travel information, so we can plan to have a worktrader or junior staffer ready to check you in and put you to work, *and*
- you agree to help cheerfully with said work—basically anything that still needs to get done before regular arrivals at 4:30, *and*
- you **eat lunch before arriving and bring your own snacks** to tide you over until dinner at approximately 7:00. If you arrive during our staff lunch (which may be mid-afternoon), please don't fix yourself a plate and sit down with us—we don't want to be rude, but we won't have planned or budgeted to feed campers during that time. *And*
- we absolutely cannot have campers arrive before 2:00 p.m.—except possibly for those traveling with worktraders whom we have asked to arrive early. If you *are* riding with a worktrader, please contact us ahead of time to discuss the possibility of special arrangements. (Depending on the timing, there may be fees in addition to work expectations.) In other respects, the above list applies to you also.

A worktrader or a junior staffer will briefly greet you and your parents, but unfortunately the senior staff cannot be available to meet parents or spend any quality time with campers until official tour and open house times.

Directions to Farm & Wilderness Firefly Song Camp

In addition to driving directions, a simple map can be found at the Farm and Wilderness website (www.farmandwilderness.org).

From Boston: Interstate 93 to Interstate 89, Take Vermont exit 1—Woodstock/Rutland/US Rt. 4. West on Rt. 4 to Rt. 100 South in West Bridgewater, south on Rt. 100, 1.9 miles to F&W entrance (Farm and Wilderness Road) on left. Follow the signs to Firefly Song.

From New York City, New Haven, and Hartford: Interstate 91 to Rt. 103, (Exit 6—Ludlow/Rutland) West on Rt. 103 to Rt. 100 North. Go 12.3 miles north on Rt. 100 and turn right on Farm and Wilderness Rd. Follow the signs to Firefly Song.

From Western NY State: Interstate 87 to Exit 20 (Fort Ann) to 149 East. From 149 E take US 4 NE to VT. Follow Route 4 east through Rutland and Killington, then take Rt. 100 south in West Bridgewater. Drive 1.9 miles and turn left on Farm & Wilderness Road. Follow signs to Firefly Song.



Departure details

Traveling by car

Parents* can arrive to pick up campers at Farm and Wilderness Firefly Song Camp between 10:00 and 10:45 a.m. Please follow the guidance of our traffic control team, so that the F&W road is not blocked and emergency vehicle access remains open.

*If you're under 18, you can be picked up by a custodial parent/guardian or by anyone listed in the "trusted contacts" section of your online account.

(If parents/guardians want to change this info after the camp session has already begun, they should update the "trusted contacts" section and *also* notify us via phone or email, then wait for confirmation that we've received the update.)

It is important that campers are off the premises by 11:15 a.m., as the NBTSC staff will be in a closing meeting and the F&W staff may be preparing the site for the next event. If you want to meet your camper's new friends, or if you think it will take a while to load your vehicle, come right at 10:00. Also, our staff loves to say hello to parents, but unfortunately won't have much time to chat or discuss the session.

If you can't depart by 11:15, we have room for a small number of hardworking, self-managing campers to stay and help with final cleanup until 1 p.m.. You will need to make arrangements with us in advance. Please note that anyone still present on the grounds at 11:15 or later will be expected to help. Breakfast is the last meal of camp (unless you've made arrangements to stay and help, in which case you'll be fed a simple dish of scrounged leftovers), so plan for snacks or lunch on the ride home.

Traveling by bus or train

If you reserve/pay for a ride, the F&W vans will drop you off at the train or bus stop. You should be back in White River Junction by approximately noon. Breakfast is the last meal we serve, so plan for snacks or lunch if you'll need something for the ride home.

Need to leave a little early?

We may be able to transport a few campers to White River Junction by 11:00 a.m. for early departures. These spots are first come first served, so phone or email right away if interested.

Traveling by air

If you reserve/pay for a ride, we'll return you to the Burlington International Airport. Please try to schedule a flight for 2:00 p.m. or later, so that the van need not depart camp super-early. (If truly necessary, you can fly out between noon and 2:00 p.m.—but this may require *all* airport campers to depart early, so please don't do this unless you must. The absolute earliest we can plan to get you to the airport is 10:30 a.m.)

Possible van transpo to Albany and Philadelphia

See details above under "Arrival Details."

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*Vermont sleeping arrangements

All Vermont campers are assigned to cabins. You'll tell us about your needs and preferences in the "Cabins" step of your online account "Health and Pre-Camp Info" section.

Bring warm bedding!

We spend our nights in **3-sided (obviously non-insulated) cabins**, and we've occasionally experienced dips into the low 30s. Imagine yourself snug in your down sleeping bag rated for winter camping, or your down comforter (complete with twin-sized flannel sheets), or layers of wool blankets...nice and cozy, resting up for each action-packed day at camp. You've got your trusty flashlight by your side in case you need to see anything in the night. (There's no electricity in the cabins.) A lovely thought...

...especially considering the alternative: you've brought the dinky little threadbare comforter, that one decorated with pictures of fetching woodland creatures, which you've had since you were four. Or you're lying in bed, trying to tuck yourself into a faux-quilted van bag that leaves your top half out in the cold. And there you shiver, as the temps dip and the breezes blow through, and your fingers turn purple (though it's hard to see them, since you forgot your flashlight), and...

Did we mention? *Please bring warm bedding!* It's likely that we'll have warm, sunny daytime weather. And we'd never let anyone's fingers turn purple. But, don't forget to BRING WARM STUFF! Check our "[what to bring](#)" section for detailed suggestions.

(Yes, it is true that in recent years we've often enjoyed unseasonably warm weather. It's also true that NBTSC Vermont is now 2 weeks earlier than it used to be. The heads up still feels important, though, since many of our years in Vermont have included notably cold stretches, especially cold nights.)

Cabin genders

Cabins are organized by gender—the choices are girls, boys, and all-gender. This means, for example, that all campers who identify as girls or women are welcome to sleep in a girls' cabin.

All-gender cabins are offered for anyone who would be most comfortable in a cabin not assigned to one gender. Even if you are cisgender (your gender identity matches your biological or "assigned at birth" sex) it's still okay to sign up for an all-gender cabin if that is your preference—don't worry that you're "taking away" a spot from someone else. If we do run out of beds we'll problem-solve at that point, prioritizing non-binary or trans campers who have asked for an all-gender cabin.

All-gender cabins are not, however, offered as an opportunity to sleep with your sweetie. Given our responsibilities as adults running a youth event, we cannot allow bed sharing, and we make an effort not to co-house campers who are romantically involved—regardless of gender configuration. Campers who want to sleep near others more cozily must do so in public group sleeping spaces rather than in cabins. (But, public group sleeping spaces may not always be on offer, or may be outdoors-only. And even in group sleeping areas each camper must sleep in their own individual sleeping bag or other personal bedding.)

Parents should know that occasionally campers change their minds regarding which type of cabin they prefer. Aside from our attempt to not place romantically-involved campers together, our policy is to respect campers' choices (and not to consult parents before making changes). That said, there may not be space available to change cabins once we are at camp.

Quiet and non-quiet cabins

One way to improve your chances of sleeping well is to request a **quiet cabin**. While *everyone* is expected to be quiet and keep the lights off during certain hours, quiet cabin folks usually cooperate extra well in this realm. Lights-out time also starts a little earlier, though you don't need to be in your cabin by a specific time.

Obviously, people in quiet cabins need to do their part to co-create a quiet, restful space for everyone.

Occasionally there aren't enough campers who want a quiet cabin so we don't designate any as "quiet." Also, cabin preferences are mostly first-come first-served, so (on rare occasions) it happens that a camper who registers later, and requests a quiet cabin, is assigned to a regular cabin instead.

See more about getting good sleep [here](#).

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Opportunities



Photo by Blake Boles, Oregon 2023

Open Houses and Visitors

Open houses and meet-the-staff opportunities for parents

(and for prospective campers and parents)

One day at most sessions we have official time when parents (and prospective NBTSC parents) can stop by to experience camp. Also, on arrival day of each session, our staff offers a quick site tour for parents, along with a short Q&A meet and greet.

We regret that we can't take time on the last (very busy) morning of camp to have extended conversations with parents, though we love to say hello.

Arrival Day meet and greet

The first day of camp is a big, busy event for us, so we need to stay within these time parameters. But we love to meet parents via our friendly, informal arrival day meeting. Bring any questions you have for our staff.

First day of camp (all sessions)

5:00 - 5:30—tours of the site led by NBTSC staff

5:30 - 6:00—meeting and Q&A for parents with staff

Midsession parent (and prospective parent) open houses

Parents of current or prospective campers are welcome at any of our open houses. Prospective campers may also come with their parents or a friend's parents. (Sorry, no prospective campers without parents.) Please check in with a staff person as soon as you arrive. You are welcome to share any meals that overlap with open house hours.

Former campers, please note: *parent open houses are for parents, not for alumni, unless you contact us to make special arrangements. Generally, we will ask you to come on a different day, and also to teach a workshop, help out with dishes, and/or contribute to camp in some way—as well as cover the cost of any meals.*

Oregon, Saturday August 9th

3:00 to 8:45 p.m.

This will most likely take you from the end of siesta/well-being time through two or three workshop slots, and then dinner and an evening all-group meeting. Most workshops warmly welcome parent participants. (Occasionally, a parent even presents a workshop—just let us know beforehand so we can announce your offering!)

Vermont, Sunday September 7th

10:15 to 4:30 p.m.

If you'd like to witness our large group morning meeting, do arrive by 10:15 a.m. and follow the crowd. (Or just join in whenever you show up.) Right after that big meeting, we most likely won't invite you to participate in our half-hour small (advisee) group gatherings, but you can wander around, look over the schedule, or take a tour with a junior staff person. The remaining open house time encompasses 2 workshop slots with lunch and siesta in between. Most workshops warmly welcome parent participants. (Occasionally, a parent even presents a workshop—ideally, let us know prior and/or show up in time for morning meeting so we can announce your offering!)

Visiting camp

Sorry, we don't normally host visitors except during parent open houses, which are for *parents* of campers (and for prospective campers and their parents). Other would-be visitors, including alumni, need to request permission to visit during open house or during another time. If you are a parent who for scheduling reasons has a hard time with our open house day, but would really like to witness NBTSC in action, do contact us—we're unlikely to host you right at the start or end of a session, but we'll try to find another day that's mutually agreeable.

(Occasionally we do invite specific guests during a session—alumni, prospective staff, visiting workshop presenters, etc.—believing they have something special to offer our community. If you see yourself in that category, contact us and we'll discuss.)

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Become a lifeguard and come to camp for less!

We offer partial worktrades at both sessions for campers who hold current lifeguard certification. In Vermont, this must be American Red Cross. In Oregon, we are open to most certifications.

Our annual worktrade application deadline is March 31, and your chances are best (and our logistics-brains happiest) if you apply on time. You'll find details and the application on the [worktrade page](#) of our website. However, often we still need lifeguards after the deadline has passed, so if you are interested and qualified you can contact us anytime.

If you are lifeguard certified but don't want a worktrade, there's still the possibility of fulfilling your "superhero" hours via lifeguarding rather than by scrubbing pots and pans and toilets. Let us know if you're interested in that.

If you're a strong swimmer and good at paying attention, we encourage you to get lifeguard certified—maybe before NBTSC next year if not this year! Some campers get certified specifically for NBTSC, to help pay their way throughout their camp careers.



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Culminating

Culminati, Culminate, Culmination. (Webster: “To reach the end or the final result of something. . . . to reach the highest or a climactic or decisive point . . . from Latin ‘to crown’.”)

NBTSC “Culmination” is the way we engage and celebrate final-year campers who opt in. Culminating requires being intentional, proactive, and highly involved. It begins in June, when qualified campers sign up via their online NBTSC accounts. Next, we ask them to start thinking about their final-year intentions and to send a thoughtful letter (or email/audio/video/etc) to staff. The process continues during each session: meeting twice with directors and staff, checking in daily with one or two other Culminati, hosting an orientation for new campers, possibly joining a panel or two to share perspectives and advice, facilitating the all-camp Closing Ceremony, and (if desired) sharing a short goodbye speech or other presentation during that ceremony. If you’re coming to more than one session in your final year, you’re part of the Culminati team throughout. (But, most campers give just one farewell presentation—that’s unless they’ve participated in multiple sessions for 3 or more years each.)

Nobody has to Culminate. You can come to camp for 6 years and then be done with it, without ever going through a formal goodbye process. Culmination is an invitation for those campers with whom the invitation resonates. It’s a process that makes sense for some campers and not for others.

To qualify, campers must meet 2 requirements

- Age **18 or older**. (But on rare occasions, we’ll consider 17-year-olds on a case by case basis.)
- Have **participated in NBTSC (any session/s) at least* 4 years** (including the current year)
 - *except* that just for 2025, campers who participated in **Vermont** in 2023 and 2024 are also eligible to Culminate this year. (This one-time exception is because we didn’t hold any post-pandemic Vermont sessions until 2023.)

*It’s not uncommon for campers to Culminate in their 5th or 6th year rather than their 4th

So... do you want to Culminate this year?

If you meet the requirements *and* it’s definitely* your last year of camp, *and* you sincerely want to participate in all the Culmination meetings and events during camp, great!

*More than once, campers have opted to Culminate and then been devastated the following year that they are no longer eligible to participate.

Sign up via your online account by June 1. We’ll be in touch with the next steps.



Photo by Grace, Oregon 2024

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Goodbye ritual & alumni hoodie available to all

Culmination is a potent experience for many campers. But sometimes, a person who doesn't want to engage NBTSC in that rather intense way still wants a way to say goodbye.

If this is your second or more year at NBTSC, and you are fairly certain you won't be coming back in future years (due to college plans or whatnot), you can participate in a simple goodbye ritual which is part of our last night's closing ceremony. Because this event is much less of a to-do than is Culmination, we do not ban participants from later changing their mind and returning as campers (whereas we have learned through trial and error that it's not good to allow Culmination to return as campers). But, to keep this ritual special, please don't include yourself unless you're quite certain you won't be back. No need to sign up in advance—you'll just step forward in the closing ceremony when the time comes.

Once you are 18 (even if it's just your *first* year of camp) you can also opt to purchase a fabulous alumni hoodie which NBTSC alumna Aremy Stewart designed for us. You can order it in advance or (if available) purchase one at camp. (Advance costs less, and you're assured of getting your preferred size.) You can't wear it during camp (we try to keep it special for those who have moved on), but if you're 18+ and finished with your camp career (or at least think you are), you can wear it on departure morning. You'll notice a lot of staffers wearing their alumni hoodies throughout the session, though.

The alumni hoodie is available to anyone who ever attended or staffed NBTSC, and who is 18+.



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T-shirt design contest

Fame and fortune await! Ever since 1997 we've had official T-shirts designed by campers, and we look forward to another great one. Guidelines:

- Send your design as a **jpg or pdf** file. You must **email it both to [Grace](#) and our [logistics team](#)** (no paper submissions).
- Design must be in **black and white** only. No grayscale or colors.
- Include the words **"Not Back to School Camp 2025"**. ("NBTSC" initials are not enough.)
- **No political, religious, etc. symbology.** T-shirts represent all of us.
- Sometimes we choose a design that depicts one of our sessions (Oregon or Vermont) more obviously than the other, but nonetheless we're always seeking a **design that evokes the overall vibe** of NBTSC — we want campers at **both sessions** to feel like their shirt represents NBTSC in a meaningful way.
- We encourage a small but legible **signature**—full name, or first name and last initial, etc. We announce the designer at all sessions—most emphatically those sessions where they are present—but a signature helps create a permanent reminder.
- You can make **color suggestions** (T-shirt color and 1 ink color), but even if we choose your design we may not choose your color suggestions. (You are welcome to send one version in simple black on white and also a color version.)
- Artwork doesn't have to be 100% original, but if you're using clip art it must be copyright-free (like a lot of computer clipart and the Dover design library). Also, the overall **design must be original**. (If the design as a whole is yours, it can be assembled from other people's copyright-free stuff.)
- The **deadline** for us to receive designs is **June 1**.
- Send **as many designs as you want**.
- Make sure you've included your **full name** in the subject line and/or in the body of your email.
- The contest is **open to all campers registered for either session of NBTSC this year**.
- **Our decision is based on** overall impact and relevance to NBTSC. The winning design will be used for both sessions.
- **The winner receives** a check for \$100, plus two T-shirts.
 - As part of your submission, please tell us what adult unisex T-shirt **size(s)** you want if your design is chosen. We can usually do XS through 3XL.



Photo (showing the NBTSC 2024 T shirt, designed by Kiaya) by Maeve Dorsey, Vermont 2024

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You have now reached the end of the 2025 NBTSC Camper and Parent Handbook!

If you're hungry for more, see the "[fine print](#)" page on our website, which links to the optional reading "NBTSC Camper Handbook Extras" and additional resources.

Thank you for reading ~ we are excited to be with you soon!



Photo by Skye P, Oregon 2022