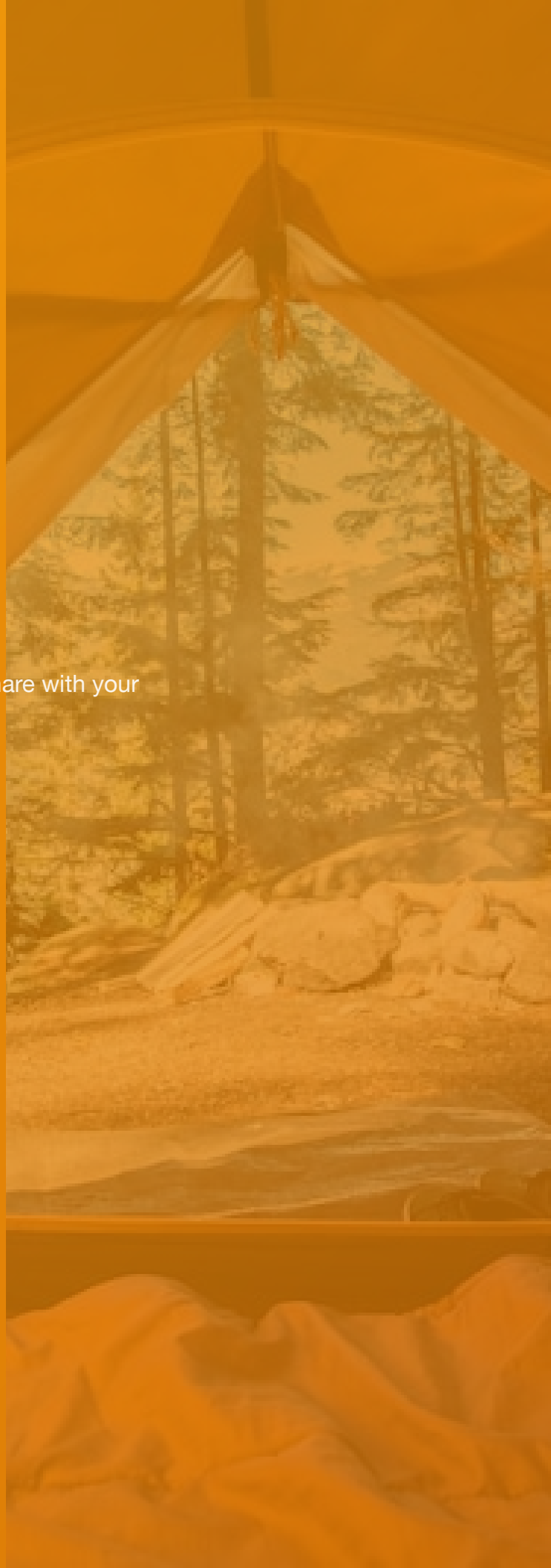


Family Camping Checklist 2026

The complete packing list for camping with kids. Share with your co-parent so nothing gets forgotten.



1. Shelter & Sleep

Practice tent setup at home before the trip

- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Family tent (4-6 person)** Room to move; vestibule for gear storage
- ☐ **Tent footprint** Protects tent floor from rocks and moisture
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Sleeping bags — each person** Temp-rated for overnight low + 10°F buffer
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Sleeping pads / air mattresses** Insulated; self-inflating pads for kids
- ☐ **Pillows** Camp pillows or bring from home for kids
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Extra blankets (2-3)** Kids kick off bags; blankets save the night
- ☐ **Tent repair kit** Patch tape, spare stakes, extra guylines

PRO TIP

Set up your tent in the backyard with your kids before the trip. They learn how to help, the setup goes faster on-site, and you catch any missing pieces while you can still fix them.

2. Kitchen & Food

A fed family is a happy family

- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Camp stove + fuel** 2-burner propane recommended
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Cooler + block ice** Block ice lasts 2× longer than cubes
- ☐ **Pots / pans / spatula** Cast iron skillet is a camp workhorse
- ☐ **Plates / cups / bowls** Reusable or compostable; skip glass
- ☐ **Utensils** Forks, knives, spoons + serving utensils
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Water jug (5-gallon)** For drinking, cooking, and handwashing
- ☐ **Dish soap + sponge** Biodegradable; wash 200ft from water
- ☐ **Paper towels** Multi-use camp essential
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Trash bags (5+)** Pack it in, pack it out
- ☐ **Aluminum foil** Foil packet meals are kid favorites
- ☐ **Coffee / tea supplies** Parents' survival kit

3. Clothing Per Person

Pack for the coldest hour, not the warmest

- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Layers for cold mornings** Fleece + long sleeves; mornings drop fast
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Sturdy closed-toe shoes** Hiking shoes or trail runners; no flip-flops
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Rain gear** Jacket + pants; ponchos for kids work too
- ☐ **Swimsuit + towel** Quick-dry towels save space
- ☐ **PJs / sleep clothes** Warm and comfortable layers
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Extra socks + underwear** Pack 2× what you think you need
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Sun hat + sunglasses** UPF 50+; retainer straps for kids
- ☐ **Warm hat + gloves** Fleece or merino for chilly evenings

4. Safety & First Aid

Prepare for the unexpected

- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **First aid kit (family size)** Band-aids, antiseptic, tweezers, pain relief, allergy meds
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Sunscreen SPF 50+ (kids)** Mineral formula; reapply every 2 hours
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Bug spray (kid-safe)** DEET-free or 10% Picaridin for under-12
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Flashlights / headlamps — each person** Kids love having their own headlamp
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Matches / lighter** Waterproof matches as backup
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Fire extinguisher / water bucket** Always have water near the fire ring
- ☐ **Emergency contacts card** Ranger station, nearest hospital, your info
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL** **Whistle per person** 3 blasts = “I need help”

PRO TIP

Teach kids the “Hug a Tree” rule: if you get lost, stop walking, hug a tree, blow your whistle, and wait. Practice it at camp so it becomes automatic. This simple rule has saved lives.

5. Camp Setup & Comfort

Turn your campsite into a home base

- ☐ **Camp chairs** One per person; kid-size chairs available
- ☐ **Camping table** Folding table for meals and activities
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Lantern (2-3)** LED lanterns; hang one inside the tent
- ☐ **Tarp / shade canopy** Rain cover for kitchen; shade for midday
- ☐ **Rope + carabiners** Clothesline, tarp rigging, general camp use
- ☐ **Firewood + kindling** Buy local to prevent pest spread
- ☐ **Camp mat / rug** Keeps dirt outside the tent

6. Kids' Extras

The items that make or break a family trip

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Comfort item / stuffed animal Non-negotiable for little ones | ☐ ESSENTIAL Baby wipes (large pack) Hands, faces, spills — everything |
| ☐ Glow sticks (pack of 20) Night-time magic; tent markers too | ☐ Portable potty (toddlers) Saves midnight trips to the restroom |
| ☐ Nature journal + crayons Draw bugs, leaves, and camp memories | ☐ Night light (battery) Small clip-on light for tent comfort |
| ☐ Binoculars Bird watching and star gazing | ☐ ESSENTIAL Snack bag (always accessible) Hangry kids = unhappy camp |
| ☐ Card games / travel games UNO, Go Fish, travel chess | ☐ Favorite drinks / juice boxes Familiar flavors keep morale high |

PRO TIP

Create a “Nature Detective” scavenger hunt before you leave home — list 10-15 things to find (pinecone, red leaf, animal track, spider web). Kids stay engaged for hours, and you get to actually sit in your camp chair.

7. Meal Planning Template

Write in your family's meals — plan at home, shop once, cook easy

Meal	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast			
Lunch			
Dinner			
Snacks			

8. Pre-Trip Checklist

Complete 24 hours before departure

- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Reserve campsite** Confirm booking; print confirmation
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Check weather** 3-day forecast; adjust gear list
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Charge all devices** Phones, headlamps, battery banks, lanterns
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Prep and pack food** Pre-chop veggies; pre-mix pancake batter
- ☐ **Load car night before** Heavy items first; kids' bag on top
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Fill water jugs** Freeze one jug — doubles as cooler ice
- ☐ **Print campground map** Mark restrooms, water, ranger station
- ☐ **ESSENTIAL Share trip plan** Tell someone where you're going + return date
- ☐ **Check gear condition** Test stove, inflate pads, check zippers
- ☐ **Pack car entertainment** Audiobooks, playlists, snacks for the drive

Family-tested gear reviews for every item on this list

Real families. Real campgrounds. Honest reviews and comparison guides — independently tested.

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