

# Rainy Days

## *Program ideas that make a splash*

**R**ain, rain, go away! Come again another day!" This rhyme is many children's lamentable response to a rainy day. At some camps, campers awaken excited because it's raining; at other camps, they just fall back into bed, disappointed. What's the difference? The attitude and behavior of the staff and the programming of the day.

By default, counselors and campers are not likely to get jazzed about rain. Two things can help:

- Have a ritual to start the rainy day out right, one that builds enthusiasm and gets rid of that blah mood.

One camp bellows out a rousing 5-minute diddy celebrating rain after breakfast and carries the tune back to the cabins for cleanup.

- Allow staff to offer or do something they'll get really excited about, something that's not normally in their program area.

The idea that some awesome activities won't be run unless it is raining will also make the day more anticipated and special to the campers.

### **Prepare for rain**

During orientation, or in daily or weekly staff meetings, brainstorm and pre-plan rainy day activities. Make up at least two rainy day programs

and distribute them to all staff before camp begins, in between sessions, or at morning day camp meetings. Then when it rains, everyone knows where to go and what to do.

### ***How many rain drops does it take?***

The first consideration in rainy day programming is to determine how many rain drops it takes to make a rainy day.

In light rain, with no lightning, many regular outdoor programs can be run safely. Scout the ground for muddy hazards or puddled-over holes. Watch campers carefully for signs of chills brought on by damp air. Also, keep inexpensive rain ponchos on hand for less rain-prepared campers.

In the event the weather forecast looks a little gloomier, treat rainy days as special programming days. Free-choice periods seem to work best. Campers choose from a smorgasbord of activities and stay at that activity until the period ends. Give groups or cabins choices for activities. Campers who have to participate in an activity they don't like, especially on a rainy day, can detract from the atmosphere and squelch the enthusiasm.

### **Outdoor rainy day programs**

With a little extra attention to safety, you can run many traditional



Photo by Bill Middleton, Camp Juliette Low, Cloudland, Ga.

### ***Rainy days CAN be fun!***

water programs rain or shine (e.g., fishing, sailing, swimming, and waterskiing). Or try these rainy day activities:

#### ***Campcraft***

Learn to build a fire in the rain.

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### ***Dam building***

A perfect opportunity to learn about beavers and their natural habitat. What would a beaver gather to build a dam and why? How are the elements put together to make an effective dam? What other living creatures would you find at a dam?

### ***Canoe puzzles***

Put pieces from two separate puzzles into sealable baggies, slap on a brightly colored sticker, and distribute them in the lake. Two teams then race to get the pieces of their puzzle and complete the puzzle back on shore. Either team may take the other team's pieces and place them in a different location in the lake. (Remind campers of watercraft safety, including proper ways to reach over the sides of watercraft.)

### ***Holey garbage can fill***

Prepare ahead: make several holes in the sides of two plastic garbage cans. Smooth out any rough edges around the holes.

Two teams try to fill the two different holey garbage cans with rain

water. One strategy: plug the holes with fingers. It takes teamwork!

### ***Indoor rainy day programs***

Many camps schedule indoor programs such as baking, ceramics, dance, drama, music, candle making, leather work, macrame, origami, and woodshop, that can take place regardless of the weather. Rain provides an opportunity for more in-depth learning in these areas as well as time to learn new games (from Simon says to crab soccer). A few more indoor activities to try:

#### ***Pass the present***

Prepare ahead: think of several fun commands or simple stunts, such as "tell a joke" or "leap like a frog." Write each command on a piece of colored paper and wrap the papers, one at a time, face down, around a small box.

Everyone sits in a circle. One person plays music (a record, the piano, a drum, etc.) while players pass around the "present." The player holding the present when the music stops peels off one layer of paper and completes the task revealed.

### ***Human game pieces***

Do you have board games such as chess, backgammon, checkers, scrabble, battleship, or monopoly? Flood the dining hall with campers willing to sit and play.

For those itching to move around, try the same games with human game pieces! For example, to play human checkers: Spread a checkered table cloth across the floor. Hand out red and black jerseys to two teams. Line up team members across the ends of the cloth, one person to a square, just as you would set up a checkers board. Two campers or counselors call out "pieces" by name and tell them where they want them to move. When "jumping" a piece, players crouch into leapfrog position. "Kinged" pieces lock arms and stand on the same square.

### ***Cabin rounds***

Too many rainy days? Running out of ideas? Host roving cabin activities. Each cabin group gets 20 minutes to think of and prepare for a fun activity to host. Activities last 20 minutes. Half the cabin groups host for the first three 20-minute periods; the other groups visit and participate. Then switch.

Is there a camper or counselor with a special talent who could teach it to others? Other ideas include songs, games, story telling, and exercises.

If the cabins or tents are too small to hold large groups, or if your campers aren't overnights, combine units to host activities in the main building or dining hall.

### ***Rain, rain, come again***

With the right staff attitude and proper prior planning, rainy days will be fun days. Your campers might even look forward to them. □

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