



INTRODUCTION AND PARTY INVITATIONS

An outdoor sleepover party provides lots of nighttime fun for your child in his or her own backyard campground.

Create **Tent Invitations**. Cut out "tent"-shaped invitations from brown construction paper, folded at the top. Open the tent, write the party details inside, and then mail to guests. Or, send postcards of national campsites with the party details written in the message area on the other side.

Alternatively, make **Sleeping Bag Invitations**. Use 2 primary color pieces of heavy cardstock to create the outside of the sleeping bag and cut out a slip of paper for the inside of the sleeping bag, using plaid paper or a different primary color, and put your party details on the inside paper. Seal the sleeping bag along the sides and the bottom with glue or staples. Send it in recycled brown envelopes for a rustic camping feel.

Use camp speak in your invitation:

You can be the *Camp Director*
 Instead of place, write *Campsite*
 Instead of time, write *Camp Hours*
 Name your camp, such as *Camp Silly* or *Camp Turning 8*

Ask guests to bring their own sleeping bags, as well as box games, comic books, flashlights, and other items for sleepover fun.

DECORATIONS

Set up tents and sleeping bags in the backyard when the guests arrive. Otherwise, erect the tents in advance. Place the tents near to the house and to a door for easy access to the toilet. If setting up camp indoors, clear the room of all furniture to give as much space as possible.

Decorate the inside of the tents with streamers and balloons.



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Build a “campfire” using an outdoor fireplace or barbecue grill — just be sure to supervise it around the kids.

Add campground equipment, such as picnic table, flashlights, bandanas, and stuffed animals for fun.

Using construction paper and poster board, paint and cut out eerie “glow-in-the-dark” eyes, and put them in trees around the camp area.

Make a large wooden sign at the entrance to the **Camp Site** and have other signs pointing the way to the toilets and showers, picnic area, and wildlife trail.

Put up a chalk board with the **Camp Rules** written on it. Examples include:

No Playing with Matches
Throw Away Rubbish
Be Gentle with the Animals

Around the edges of the camp, place some citronella torches to keep the bugs away and add to the camp atmosphere.

Hang multi-colored Chinese lanterns around the garden.

Set up a picnic table and cover it with a green or camouflage cloth. Use plastic tableware or tin plates and cups. Provide bug stickers for each child to personalize their own plates and mugs.

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES



Flashlight Tag. Give the guests flashlights when it gets dark, and have them play tag using the flashlight beams to “tag” other players.

What’s That Noise? Tape record sounds, such as a dog barking, a chain rattling, a door creaking, etc. Have the kids listen in the dark and guess what that noise is.

Midnight Hike. Set up an obstacle course in the yard. Then, have the guests hold hands and weave them through the course in the dark.

Ghost Story. Make up a ghost story and pass around “body parts” made from foods, such as peeled grapes for eyeballs, spaghetti for brains, a peach half for liver, and so on. Or, let the kids make up the story as you pass around the parts. Pass around a flashlight for each kid to use during tale-telling.

Have a **water balloon fight**.



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Get a telescope and gaze at the stars a while.

Blow bubbles and shine your flashlights on them. This activity provides cool effects everyone is sure to love.

Take a long hike/walk through your neighborhood, and even better if you have woods or a park nearby.

Have a sing-a-long around the campfire. Does anyone play guitar?

Provide bug jars and catch fireflies.

Create **Personalized Canes**. Purchase inexpensive doweling rods from a hardware store and provide the campers with paint, glue, stickers, and glitter to personalize their own walking sticks. Use these canes on your hike.

Boulder Art. Collect some rocks or largish boulders before your party. Provide the kids with paintbrushes and paint and have them design their own rocks. Alternatively, use small pebbles and stick on wool, eyes, and scraps to make rock pets.

Musical Camping Chairs/Rocks. Have the kids dance around the chairs or the painted rocks. Make sure there is one less seat for the number of children. When the music stops, each child has to find a chair/rock to sit on. The one who doesn't is out and can help with the music.

Wildlife Trail. Hide a variety of cuddly toys, plastic animals, nature objects (e.g. a shell, pine cone) around the camp area. Split the kids into teams and give each one a list of items to find plus a bag to put them in. First team to complete the list wins.

Snake Pit Tug O' War. Use a large paddling pool or sand box and fill with lots of rubber snakes. Organize the campers into two teams and get them tugging a rope over a snake pit! First team pulled into the snake pit is out. All the kids can then dive in afterwards and see who can get the most snakes.

Feed the Bear. Make a large cardboard bear head with a big opening for the mouth. Hang it from a tree branch or a bush and get the campers to throw plastic food into its mouth. See who can get the most items in.

Bug Bites. Issue each child a strip of bug stickers and then it's *each bug for himself!* The aim of the game is to "bite" someone by sticking a bug on their back without them noticing. At the end of the game the person with the least stickers is declared the champion bug, but the person with the most stickers on his back gets to keep them.



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PARTY MENU

Roast hot dogs on an outdoor fireplace or barbeque grill and serve with baked beans.

Serve trail mix.

Roast corn on the cob and serve with melted butter.

Make s'mores from graham crackers, roasted marshmallows, and chocolate bars.

Campfire Log. Bake a thin rectangular cake on a cookie sheet. Frost it with chocolate icing, roll it up, and cover it with more chocolate frosting to resemble a log.

Serve hot chocolate in Thermos® bottles. Or, bring the kids hot chocolate in the middle of the night.

Serve **Bug Juice**: lemonade with green food coloring and a plastic bug floating on the top of the juice.

The next morning, serve griddle pancakes with fruit and chocolate chip fillings rolled inside.

Serve an assortment of fruit juices and chocolate milk.

PARTY FAVORS

Send the campers home with a small backpack filled with mini-flashlights, freeze-dried camp food, compass, comic books, camping supplies, glow-in-the-dark stickers, water toys, etc.

Alternatively, have the kids enjoy one more parting activity — panning for minerals and stones. Purchase an assortment of rocks, stones, and minerals and hide them throughout the party area. Right before the kids depart, provide them with brown paper lunch sacks and have them search out the stones to take home with them.

You have the entire evening to take pictures of the kids having fun during the campout. Remember to send the pictures to your party guests with your thank you notes.

