



SHADY CREEK
COUNSELOR HANDBOOK
Everything you need to know before you get there!

Dear Counselor:

Welcome to the **SHADY CREEK** staff! You are an important part of the team of counselors, teachers, and naturalists that make **Shady Creek** a unique and wonderful experience for thousands of fifth and sixth graders each year. Your job is both challenging and extremely rewarding. You have the responsibility for leading young people through a fun and exciting week of learning in an outdoor classroom. Your primary concern is always for the safety and well-being of the kids. You will spend just one week of your life with these children, but the experiences you'll share are bound to leave memories for you and your kids that will last a lifetime. You will learn as they learn. Without a doubt you will discover new things about yourself. The more energy, enthusiasm, and caring you put into this week, the better experience the students will have and the more you will receive in return.

Shady Creek Outdoor School is a place that teaches children about the natural environment, outdoor skills, and cultural history. Along with the students, you will have the chance to learn about these subjects. **Shady Creek** is also a place where young people learn important social skills - living with a new group of students in beautiful but unfamiliar surroundings - developing self-confidence and a sense of independence during a week of outdoor adventure and learning. The role of counselor at **Shady Creek** is one of leadership. The key to a great week at **Shady Creek** is for you to provide the direction, guidance, and leadership your kids need, while filling the week with all the fun and good times you can muster.

Thank you. We hope you have a wonderful experience at **Shady Creek!**

Sincerely,

The Shady Creek Staff

P.A.C.K.

A great counselor is a member of the “Pack.”

To have a great week at Shady Creek, it is important to remember what it takes to be a “member of the Pack.” Each letter stands for an attribute of an excellent counselor.

Patience:

There will be times when the students’ needs and actions will try your patience. If you stay focused, take the time to get to know your students, listen to them, and; when necessary, seek assistance from teachers and naturalist staff, you and your students will have a great week.

Attitude:

From the moment you meet your students they will be assessing who you are and how they feel about you (and ultimately their week at Shady Creek). Greet the students with a smile, take an interest in them, stay positive, and be a great role model. Your positive outlook will rub off on the students and ultimately guide their behavior.

Caring:

When you take the time to learn your students’ names, listen when they talk, and take an interest in them they will know that you care. When the students feel cared about they also feel safe and secure in their new surroundings. Such caring is the foundation for a week at Shady Creek Outdoor School.

Kids:

Always remember that we are all here for the 5th and 6th grade “kids” who are in attendance. Keep your focus on your students and let us know of any ways we can help to make this a positive experience for them (and ultimately for you as well).

Thanks for all you are about to do for the students and welcome to the Shady Creek “Pack.”

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT SHADY CREEK COUNSELOR

They like children!

They enjoy nature and the outdoors.

They are enthusiastic and energetic.

They have a sense of humor.

They are good role models in behavior and appearance.

They are firm, fair, and friendly in dealing with children.

They ask for help when needed.



Table of Contents

Role Model and Leader	1
Counselor Roles	2
In the Cabin	2
Outside the Cabin	4
Day by Day Steps for a <i>Great Week</i>	6
Shady Creek Rules	8
Discipline	9
Help!	10
Cabin Games and Activities	11
Counselor Clothing and Equipment Checklist	12



ROLE MODEL AND LEADER

As a SHADY CREEK counselor you will become a role model for fifth and sixth grade students. The students will look up to you. Not only will they be watching your every move, they will also begin to act like you, talk like you, and even dress like you! Remember, you will constantly be teaching by the example you set.

To be an effective counselor, you will need to be a leader. The students in your cabin need your direction and leadership and will look to you for guidance and approval. We have discovered that any time Shady Creek has a truly outstanding week, we had counselors that were excellent leaders and outstanding role models.

COUNSELOR ROLES

This is a big job with a lot of responsibilities. To make things easier, here is a list of a Shady Creek Counselor's primary roles **inside** and **outside** the cabin.

In the Cabin:

Shortly after all the students arrive, everyone will go to the amphitheater for our first meeting. At this meeting the students will meet the naturalists and teachers and you will receive your cabin group.

Moving In

- ❖ The principal and program director will assign you and your students to a cabin.
- ❖ Be sure all students are present! If not, notify the principal or director.
- ❖ Be sure sleep walkers/bed wetter's or any other student with a physical impairment get a bottom bunk.
- ❖ Introduce yourself to the students and help them get to know each other. See "Cabin Games" for icebreakers and other activities.
- ❖ Formulate a set of Cabin Living Rules with the students. Write them down and tape them to the wall. Let the students suggest the rules. Do not allow silly or off-color rules. Typical rules are:
 - Keep your bunk and belongings clean and neat.
 - Hands off each others' belongings.
 - Treat each other with respect.
 - No foul language



20/20 Quiet Time

Students are given a chance to wind down and relax. After walking to your cabin, students are **required** to be on their own bunks for 20 minutes of rest. They may sleep, read, or write, but it must be quiet. The next 20 minutes can be spent writing in journals, sharing a story, or quietly talking to their bunk mate. The last 10 minutes can be used to walk down to the Dining Hall for meals at your scheduled meal time or your next scheduled activity. The principal and teachers will help enforce this. Once the kids accept this schedule, both you and they will grow to appreciate the chance for quiet rest.

BEDTIME AND LIGHTS OUT

Getting children to quiet down and go to sleep can be a challenge. To do the same with a group of children in a new and exciting environment will definitely be a challenge. To get your cabin group ready to go to sleep, follow these steps:

1. Give them a specified amount of time to brush their teeth, use the restroom and get ready for bed.
2. Give them five more minutes to get in their bunks.
3. They can now talk for five minutes, but they must stay in their bunks.
4. Now they can whisper for five minutes, but only to the person next to them.
5. If time still allows, read a book to the students or have a student volunteer to read it. Keep reading until lights out time.

As you probably noticed, this sequence of steps is from active to quiet to even quieter. If you allow the students to do what they want until lights out, they will continue to be active and noisy. You must have them wind down gradually. Be a leader! Have a plan and enforce it!



Cabin Clean-Up

Each morning, you and your cabin members will need to clean your cabin before breakfast. The principal checks the cabins shortly after breakfast, issues points, and daily totals are tallied at the end of the week. Prizes are given to the cleanest and best behaved cabins. A list of specific duties will be given to you during your training session.



Outside the Cabin

Class Time: Twice each day the students will go on a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hour outdoor class to learn about birds, ecology, wilderness survival skills, Native American culture and other subjects. You will be assigned to one class each day (morning or afternoon). Because you are a powerful role model, your participation in activities and discussions will have a strong positive influence.



As a counselor on classes, your responsibilities include:

1. Help the children pay attention and focus on the naturalist and the lesson. Hint: If you are interested in the lesson, the students will be interested too!
2. Help the naturalist and teacher maintain good discipline. Hints: Speak quietly but firmly to children who are disturbing others. Encourage them to participate. Enforce hiking rules: stay on the trail, don't throw rocks, don't run down hills, etc.
3. When hiking, it is best to place yourself at the end of the group. If two counselors are on class, be sure to separate (one counselor in the middle, and one at the end).
4. If there is an emergency you may be needed to assist an injured student, or take them to the Gauze Pad.

Evening Programs: Throughout the week naturalists will present evening programs. Topics range from night time animals and astronomy to endangered species and conservation. Your role, aside from having a good time, will be to keep the kids focused, involved, and discourage any misbehavior. You can do this by:

- ❖ Sitting with your cabin group. Your presence is very important!
- ❖ Singing along on songs. Remember, you're a role model.

Meal Time: In the Dining Hall, you will supervise a table for your cabin group. You may be joined by a naturalist or teacher. Your role will be to encourage good table manners and behavior (i.e., saying "please" and "thank you", and speaking in low "indoor" voices) and organize the serving of the meal.

Recreation: This is your time to shine as a leader and show off some of your talents! Each day from 4:15 - 5:00 p.m. we offer recreation activities for the students. You and another counselor will be assigned to supervise an activity; you may lead a giant game of "Black Bart Ball", help kids make friendship bracelets, or teach the kids something you know (cheerleading, sign language, cartoon sketching, dancing, you name it!)





DAY BY DAY STEPS FOR A GREAT WEEK



Sunday - Starting Off Right

The Shady Creek "Counselor Coordinator" will meet you on Sunday afternoon and begin your orientation. Listen carefully and ask questions. You will learn many things that will help you throughout the week. You will receive a "Day by Day" schedule and more suggestions for cabin activities. Get to know your fellow staff, the naturalists, and other counselors.

Monday - Setting the Tone

The students arrive at 10:30 am and your role begins in earnest. **Set the tone** for a week of fun, sharing, and learning by getting to know them through name games and other activities (see "Cabin Games and Activities"). Hold your first cabin meeting. Assign bunks and make sure kids integrate with other schools. Avoid students from one school dominating the room. Encourage new friendships. Formulate a cabin contract with the students. Go over the daily schedule, including class times, cabin clean-up, 20/20 quiet time, shower time, bedtime and lights out. Monday is a key day; you've got to start off right!

- ❖ Help your kids move in.
- ❖ Remember, FUN and SAFETY are top priorities!
- ❖ Set limits - make the rules and your expectations clear.

Tuesday and Wednesday - Have An Awesome Week!

Make the most of the times you are with your cabin group. Play games in the cabin. In nice weather play games and activities in the general vicinity of your cabin. Avoid cabin "dead time." That is when problems can start. There are two outdoor classes each day. You are assigned to either a morning or afternoon class. Help your students find their classes and then locate your own.

During the class you are off duty, you have a brief meeting with the counselor coordinator and principal. Meet in the Kids Corner, unless otherwise specified to address problems, questions, techniques that worked, etc.

- ❖ Night Hike on Tuesday - kids love it!

Thursday and Friday - Make it Memorable

Thursday afternoon varies from the norm. In some weeks "Special Events" are offered. Students will be offered a variety of classes like: Advanced survival, photo hike, bird walk, radical roam, etc. You will also be assigned a class if you had the morning off. This "special event" session is a lot of fun for everyone and shorter than other classes (1:00 - 2:25 p.m.). At 2:25 p.m. everyone meets in the Dining Hall for an entertaining play, called "Eco-Kid", performed by our naturalists.



Thursday evening or early Friday morning encourage your kids to exchange addresses with new friends. Bring them together for a memory sharing time, during which they can share highlights of the week and sign autographs.

Remember, Friday morning the cabins are thoroughly cleaned and all luggage brought to the loading areas before **breakfast**.

SHADY CREEK RULES!

Shady Creek is a School. Whenever students, teachers, and counselors are present at Shady Creek, the facilities are considered to be a school. Like any other school, the following will not be tolerated:

1. Absolutely no alcohol or drugs! Students found in violation will be sent back to their home school immediately and subject to the discipline policy there.
2. Stay with your assigned cabin group. Counselors leaving their cabins and students are subject to immediate dismissal from Shady Creek.
3. Do not touch students of the same or opposite sex. This is for your protection, as well as theirs. No rough-housing with students.

Cabin Living Rules:

1. Students may not enter any cabin other than their own.
2. No rough-housing in the cabins.
3. Do not touch other students belongings.
4. Lights out at 9:30 p.m.

Safety Rules:

1. If you go hiking on your break, tell someone where you are going and leave a note.
2. Know how to recognize and avoid poison oak.
3. Always know where your students are; report any missing student immediately to the principal or teacher.
4. Take any sick or injured student to the Gauze Pad (nurse's station) as soon as possible and bring all your students with you or have a teacher supervise them.
5. Report any safety hazards or problems in the cabin promptly to the Shady Creek staff.

DISCIPLINE

There will definitely be times when you have to deal with misbehavior in the cabin. Try to be both firm and positive. Many behavior problems can be reduced or even eliminated by keeping the kids occupied with games and activities. Avoid those "dead" times. The best way to handle behavior problems is as follows:

1. Make your expectations and rules clear to the students on the first day. Be sure they understand. Be firm, set limits, and earn students' respect first; friendship will follow. You can get more lenient as the week goes on, but it's difficult to become strict after being lenient.
2. Praise students when they are doing what you have asked them to do. Let them know when they are doing a good job!
3. If a student chooses not to follow a cabin rule, you must enforce a consequence. Repeated warnings are only empty words, so follow through. Consequences which you can enforce are:
 - Time-out (five minutes of sitting quietly)
 - Loss of privilege (Last in line, early to bed, etc.)
 - Visit with the student's teacher or principal.
4. If a student breaks a rule after a warning, you must refer them to their teacher or the principal who may choose to discipline in one of the following manners:
 - A. Student meets with teacher (and may lose a privilege such as recreation).
 - B. Students meets with principal, may phone home.
 - C. Student is sent home.

REMEMBER that for any serious discipline problem, you should notify the student's teacher, principal, or program director! We want you to be the "good guy."

"Discipline" methods that are **never** allowed:

1. Yelling at or threatening students. No foul language. ("Shut-up" is considered foul language as well)
2. Physical punishments (e.g. Push-ups, etc.).
3. Never hold, hit, or strike a child!

Counselors should never take on disciplinary roles for anything except dealing with minor behavior problems. The teachers and the principal are the only part of our staff specifically responsible for discipline. Leaving the discipline up to them lets you remain on good terms with your cabin group. This way you can solve behavior problems without jeopardizing the wonderful friendships and bonds that form between you and your kids.

HELP



All of the staff here at Shady Creek recognize that your job is very challenging. Remember, **you are not working alone!** We are all available to help you, so please ask for help when you need it. If you have any problems with students or personal problems, let the principal know immediately.

Behavior Problems: The teachers are without a doubt your most valuable resource for behavior problems. You will be meeting daily with the principal, so he or she may be the first person you notify. They can help resolve problems and make contact with the student's teacher. Notify the principal or program director immediately if a serious problem is encountered.

Sick or Injured Students: Take all sick or injured students to the Gauze Pad (nurse's station) next to the Dining Hall. You may ask a teacher or other adult staff member to assist you in getting a child to the nurse. Our nurse will treat minor injuries and illnesses and distribute students' medications throughout the day and evening. The nurse is a valuable resource to counselors for advice in dealing with homesickness, bedwetting, and sleepwalking. Hopefully, everyone in your cabin will remain healthy throughout the week.

CABIN GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

Group games can be important in helping your cabin achieve a feeling of togetherness. They can also help to eliminate discipline problems. Make sure that no rough-housing occurs during this time. Focus on a spirit of fun and good sportsmanship. Involve everyone and Avoid games that create winners or losers.

The Shady Creek Counselor Coordinator will share several activities with you throughout the week. In addition, please bring some activities and ideas of your own and share them with fellow counselors. Here are a few suggestions to get you thinking.

1. Sing songs - Teach them something new to sing. You and your cabin can perform your song during a "moment of sharing".
2. Name Games -
 - a) Go around the circle saying your name plus the names of the people before you.
 - b) "My name is ' _____ ' and I like ' _____ ' (soccer, carnivals, popcorn, etc.) Each person repeats the name and the hobby of each person before them. The last person repeats them all.
3. Ha Ha!
First person says, "Ha." Next person says "ha ha." Next person says "ha ha ha!" and so forth until it has gone around the circle. Now try it again, without anyone smiling!
4. Charades - Two teams are chosen. Each team writes the name of a movie, book, or TV show on a piece of paper. Opposite team member must act out the title so his team will guess it. (3 minute time limit)
5. 20 Questions - Leader thinks of something in room, players have 20 "yes" or "no" questions to guess what it is.

COUNSELOR CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

- _____ Health form, Counselor Contract, Handbook
- _____ Sleeping Bag or 2 blankets, pillow
- _____ 1 pair of shoes (basketball, tennis, or running)
- _____ 1 pair of boots or strong shoes for hiking on trails
- _____ 1 Heavy jacket
- _____ 1 Poncho or raincoat
- _____ 1-2 warm sweatshirts or sweaters
- _____ Warm shirts (wool/synthetic have insulating value superior to cotton)
- _____ T-shirts
- _____ Pants (tough older jeans)
- _____ Shorts
- _____ Socks and underwear to last the week
- _____ Pajamas
- _____ Towel
- _____ Soap and washcloth
- _____ Comb/Brush
- _____ Toothbrush/toothpaste
- _____ Handkerchiefs/tissues
- _____ Sunglasses/sunscreen/chapstick
- _____ Hat or cap
- _____ Gloves/mittens
- _____ Stationary and stamps
- _____ Watch or small clock (very important! No clock radios please)
- _____ Flashlight and batteries
- _____ Camera
- _____ Water bottle or canteen
- _____ Musical instrument (optional)
- _____ Books for kids

Limit yourself to one suitcase or duffle bag plus a sleeping bag and pillow.

Label all important items with your name and school name.

Be prepared for rain, snow, or sunny skies! Anything is possible.

Please do not bring:

Curling Irons

Food

Gum or Candy (it may be kept in the counselor game room but not in the cabin)

Radios, MP3 players, IPODS, etc.

Knives

Firearms

Scary stories

Cell Phones

Smoking or chewing tobacco are not allowed! Use of these products on a school campus is in violation of the Education Code.

Cosmetics used by counselors must be used minimally and with discretion. Encourage kids to "go natural" with your example.

Your Shady Creek Address is:
Your name/counselor
c/o Shady Creek Outdoor School
18601 Pathfinder Way
Nevada City, CA 95959
(530) 292-3436

Thanks for volunteering to be a counselor at Shady Creek!
And thanks for taking the time to read this and better
prepare yourself for Shady Creek and your kids!

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