



SHADY CREEK COUNSELOR HANDBOOK

Everything you need to know before you get there!

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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

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.

LEADING THE PACK

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).

More Characteristics of a Great 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.



STEPS FOR A GREAT WEEK



RIGHT OFF THE BUS

The Shady Creek “Counselor Coordinator” will meet you on Monday morning and give you a brief 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. When you meet the kids for the first time smile and do your best to make a good first impression. The students will be excited to meet you!

SET THE TONE

For many of you, your first chance to **set the tone** for the week will be when you meet the bus to ride up to Shady Creek. You won't know who is in your cabin yet, but still take the time to talk to the children around you. Ask them questions about themselves, and find out what their interests are. Once you get your cabin group, **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, quiet cabin 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.
- ❖ Observe your students - Are they dressed properly for an outdoor class? Are they involved? Do they look healthy? Etc.

MAKE THE MOST OF IT

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.

MAKE IT MEMORABLE

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.

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.

INSIDE THE CABIN

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 counselor coordinator.
- ❖ Be sure that sleepwalkers, bed wetter's and students with physical impairments get a bottom bunk. You will receive this confidential information from the school nurse. Remember to be discreet!

- ❖ 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 inappropriate rules, and try to use positive language. Typical rules are:
 - Keep your bunk and belongings clean and neat.
 - Hands off each other's belongings.
 - Treat each other with respect.
 - Use positive language.

QUIET CABIN TIME

Each day students will be given quiet time in the cabin. Many students bring journals and their teachers expect them to work on them in the cabin. Ask the kids in your group if they have a journal and encourage them to write during the quiet cabin time. Students may also take this time to sleep, or read. This is also a good time to share a story, or quietly talk with bunkmates. Just remember this is a calm time for the students to rest. The teachers and principal will help enforce that the time is quiet. After the students get used to this time, all of you will enjoy the quiet.

SHOWER TIME

The restrooms at Shady Creek are located very close to the cabins. They are very nice, but you will have to share with other cabins. You will shower during your free time, but to make sure all the teachers and students have the opportunity for a hot shower, each cabin has an assigned shower time. It is very important that your cabin **STICK TO THE SCHEDULE**. Your cabin will also be assigned a time when you will all clean the restroom.

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. Go to the restrooms as a group. Do not allow students to shower at this time.
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 or story 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 & THE CABIN COOPERATION CONTEST

Each morning, you and your cabin members will need to clean your cabin before the morning class. This means having all personal belongings put away, emptying the trash, and sweeping or vacuuming. The principal checks the cabins shortly after breakfast, issues points, and daily totals are tallied at the end of the week. You can also be awarded points for good manners in the dining hall, or doing extra duties around camp. 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 outdoor classes to learn about birds, ecology, wilderness survival skills, Native American culture and other subjects. Most Counselors 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.

MEETING AND FREE TIME

During the class you are off duty, you have a brief meeting with the counselor coordinator and principal. This will be your time to address problems, ask questions, and share techniques that worked. After the meeting you will have free time to shower, do homework, catch up on your sleep, or explore the camp. Please do not enter other cabins, or join classes without asking permission from the naturalist.

EVENING PROGRAMS

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 are a role model.

On Skit Night you and the students are given the opportunity to share your own skits, songs, poems, and unique talents. Begin thinking about what you can do to encourage your cabin to participate. Help them write a skit about their week at Shady Creek, or have your cabin lead a sing along of one of the new songs they will learn at camp. The more excited you are, the more excited they will be!

MEALS & ATTENDANCE

In the Dining Hall, you will supervise a table for your cabin group. A naturalist or teacher may join you. 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. During meals you will also track attendance and track how many items each student eats.

RECREATION

This is your time to shine as a leader and share 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!)

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. Smoking or chewing tobacco is not allowed! Use of these products on a school campus is in violation of the Education Code.
3. Stay with your assigned cabin group. Counselors leaving their cabins and students are subject to immediate dismissal from Shady Creek.
4. Do not touch students of the same or opposite sex. This is for your protection, as well as theirs. No roughhousing 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 9:15 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.

TECHNOLOGY RULES

For the students attending Shady Creek, this is a rare opportunity experience a week free from television, video games, cell phones and the internet. You can help by observing the following rules:

1. Please only use your phone during your free time away from the students. This includes texting! Please don't discuss specific students in your cabin.
2. NEVER allow students to use your phone to call home. Only their teacher and the principal can make this decision.
3. Please do not bring an iPod or mp3 player, and never play music in the cabin unless you bring an instrument or your cabin is singing!
4. NEVER post photos of students on the internet including social networking websites! You may take photos for you own personal memories.

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, counselor coordinator, 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 roughhousing 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 Skit Night.
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 those before them. The last person repeats them all.
3. Silent Line Up - Challenge your students to silently line up by their shoe size, height, birthday, etc. Get progressively harder, and then talk to the students about the challenges of using other types of communication.
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 (optional)
- _____ Games (cards, board games, etc)

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

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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